

Questions for Reflection

Belonging

Consider your program - its philosophy, mission, policies and daily practices. How do the program's values reflect and affect your relationship with each child? With each family? Is everyone's voice valued? How would an observer know?

Which policies and practices may be barriers to establishing relationships and ensuring the meaningful participation of all children? Of all families?

What else can be done to strengthen relationships and ensure social inclusion, participation, and a sense of belonging for each child and family?

If you make one change today to strengthen relationships in your program, what will it be? If you were to make another change tomorrow, what would it be?

“What I’ve come to understand is that the most important work I do - to see a child in positive ways - is within me. I must continually work to transform my own view of children’s behaviours, see their points of view, and strive to uncover how what I am seeing reveals the children’s deep desire, eagerness, and capacity for relationships. There is no more important or rewarding work than this.”

Curtis, 2009, page 12.



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Well-being

How can your program put more emphasis on outdoor exploration and play that engage the body, mind and senses?

How can the environment be arranged to encourage children to engage in activities that involve an element of manageable risk (appropriate for children's varied capabilities)?

What improvements are needed to ensure that the type of meals/snacks and the eating environment reflect the goals of the child?

Children's present and future well-being is influenced by their ability to self-regulate. How can your program move from a focus on the adult managing children's behaviour towards a stronger focus on supporting children developing self-regulation capacities?

“There is clear evidence that early experiences have a significant impact on the biology of the body and on brain development, with implications for lifelong physical and mental health and well-being.”

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007



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Engagement

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If we all see children as curious, competent, and capable of complex thinking, how will this be reflected in the environment? How could greater complexity and challenge be integrated into the environment?

How do you know when children and families are fully engaged? Based on your observations of individual children, when are they most engaged? How can you give visibility to this?

Consider how the environment and experiences that you provide for children engage them. What draws them in?

What areas of the environment do not attract children? Why might this be? What changes might be needed?

How can families be engaged and drawn into the space? How can children and families be engaged in shaping the environment?

“A lack of clutter [as well as] thoughtfully organized, rich open-ended materials invite the children to make relationships, and to communicate their ideas in many ways...It is not merely a matter of decorating. The arrangements of materials should invite engagement, meaning-making, and exploration. Thinking of ‘aesthetic’ as being the opposite of ‘anesthetic’, a shutting down of the senses, may help with appraising the environment in a richer way.”

Callaghan, 2012, page 12.



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Expression

At the end of each day, ask yourself, “How much time did I spend connecting (direct and meaningful interactions)? Directing (telling children what to do)? Correcting (telling children what not to do)?” What is your C:D:C ratio?

Working with colleagues (and outside agencies that may support speech and/or language development), identify strategies to support each other in engaging children in authentic, reciprocal communication exchanges and conversations (e.g., “What can we do so that we’re hearing more of the children’s voices and less of the adults voices?”).

Consider the concept that children have “100 languages”. How many ways are there for children to express themselves in your program?

How can you make sure that every child, regardless of his or her communication abilities, is heard?

“When educators are aware of and able to understand and respond to the many ‘languages’ children use to communicate, they give every child a ‘voice’. Regardless of the child’s age or ability, reciprocal communication exchanges (especially those that allow children to initiate conversations with others) build a sense of connection and enhance children’s language skills, social conversation skills, and cognitive activity.”

How does learning happen?, Page 41.



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