EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE HOMES



NEW BRUNSWICK CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK For Early Learning and Child Care

~ ENGLISH









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USING THE NEW BRUNSWICK CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK IN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE HOMES —

The New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care offers unique opportunities and challenges for educators in Early Learning and Childcare Homes. There are many right ways to put the values, goals and learning principles of the framework into practice, and these pages show how this has been done in New Brunswick Early Learning and Childcare Homes.

As you read these pages, and look at the corresponding pages of the curriculum framework, keep in mind the unique contribution you make to accomplishing the shared vision for New Brunswick's young children: "that all children will grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth and a zest for living and learning" (p1).

VALUING ENVIRONMENTS (P.14-15)

The curriculum framework acknowledges the physical environment "as an essential component of early learning," one that "is often referred to as 'the third teacher'" (p14). As suggested in the video, Many Right Ways: Designing your home Child Care Environment, there are many ways to set up a home environment for early learning and care. As you consider what works best for you and your families, talk with your regional coordinator and visit other home daycares to discover new ideas, share questions, and challenge yourself to try something different.

> Also keeping in mind the uniqueness of your home environment, make the most of opportunities to:

- use different indoor and outdoor spaces within your home and your local community;
- · add your personal touch, which is part of your home and who you are as an educator;
- draw upon everyday events welcome a neighbor, collect the mail - and use contextually relevant tools, such as cooking utensils, cleaning and garden tools (Wright 2004).



- What makes your Early Learning and Childcare Home unique?
- In what ways are family contributions invited and honoured?



"I have learned since I came home to work that the more relaxed I am, the more free I am. The more I give to the children and myself, the more learning takes place."



Wright (2005) emphasizes the importance of everyday occurrences, such as travel time, as catalysts for rich learning

opportunities for observation and talk, as well as for valuing relationships. She observes: "Accommodating the comings and goings of others could be seen to be a constraining feature of home-based settings, but this, in itself, suggests a sense of being embedded within a community" (Wright 2005, p21). In creating family-like environments, Carter (2005) suggests strategies such as creating a living room space with pictures of family life to keep the focus on home and extended families. In this way, valuing environments in a home- based setting is strongly linked to valuing relationships.







- Remember that the environment you create is an extension of your home.
- · As you make parents and visitors feel at home, relationships and rapport will develop and grow.
- Show that you value and respect children by filling the environment with their things, for example, pictures and artwork.



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The Curriculum Framework values children as "curious and communicative individuals" who are "actively constructing, co-constructing and reconstructing their understanding of the world within various communities of learning (p8). This view of children remains consistent whether children are in centre or home-based care, and whether they are grouped in same-age or mixed-aged groupings.

Mixed-Age Groupings

Katz (1998) highlights the many advantages of working with mixed-age groupings. These groupings better resemble the groups children encounter in family and community life, where everyone makes a contribution

according to their ability. Grouping children in this way reminds us of the richness of diversity, prompting us to provide contextually relevant tools, materials that appeal to a wide agerange, and opportunities for children to teach and learn from each other.



Mixed-age groupings are not without their challenges, especially when ages range from infancy to school age. Materials and tools that are appropriate for four-year olds are not always safe in the hands of toddlers. Some materials may need to be stored out of reach and made available to older children only when the younger children are otherwise occupied or sleeping. Some spaces may be off limits for boisterous play, to protect crawling infants and toddlers. Educators and children need to be extra vigilant. 'Looking out for' the younger or more vulnerable children should not be onerous, but rather the hallmark of a caring community.

Same-Age Groupings

When children are grouped according to age, differences may be less obvious, but are no less important. Within every aged group there is always a wide range of ability and experience. Ensuring each child's full engagement and contribution requires that educators observe and respond to children's diverse strengths and passions.

Sometimes different groups of children rotate through the space (e.g. morning and afternoon classes) and educators need to consider how each group can gain a sense of ownership and responsibility whilst acknowledging that others occupy the space in their absence. Communication between groups is essential and can be accomplished through

letter writing, documentation, and displays of children's work, all mediated by explanations from educators. One group's work might inspire the other group to undertake a similar project, and lead to the ongoing crosspollination of ideas.



"I feel the biggest difficulty with mixed ages is trying to have enough supplies that range through the age groups."

"I adore having a mixed age group... we learn something new from each other every day!"



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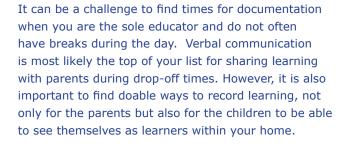
"Children's early learning and care is profoundly influenced by the quality of relationships they experience" (New Brunswick Curriculum Framework, p11).

Wright (2005) found that home-based settings were characterized by "close interpersonal relationships" and "connection with families (both the children's and the educators)" (p43). These environments were also found to be rich in terms of relationships between older and younger children.

Freeman and Vakil (2007) highlight four characteristics of family childcare that contribute to rich relationships, including: (i) small enrollments, (ii) educators who are well acquainted with the children's families, (iii) strong continuity between home and childcare setting, and, (iv) multi-age groupings.

"Tap into the uniqueness that is all around you whether it is in nature, yourself or neighbours in your community - you don't have to go to a great expense to create learning opportunities."





On p.64 you will find a helpful list of ideas that range across child care settings, with individuals and groups. Consider which work best for you but also challenge yourself to try new ideas from the list. Importantly, remember that it is not about quantity but rather about focusing "educators', children's, and parents' attention on what individual children and groups of children are learning" (p.63) within your setting.



FOR REFLECTION:

- How do you currently plan and document learning?
- What is a passion that you can share with the children?
- In what ways, do you take the time to "be present" with the children in your care?

RESPONSIVE PLANNING (P.59-62)

Enid Elliott (2009) outlined helpful reminders about how observation can set the stage for responsive planning:

- Being present being in the moment with the children.
- Listening closely to what the children are saying.
- Reflecting on what is happening considering their words and actions and your own.
- Wondering.

Elliott emphasizes the importance of taking time to make the connection between noticing, recognizing and responding. In this way, educators can "take their lead from children and build on their prior knowledge" (p.60).

Keep in mind how your own strengths and passions also contribute to responsive planning. As Wright noticed, in home-based childcare the "essence of the educator and her family is evident". "The educators' passions,

values, beliefs and practices contributed to the materials and experiences available to children and in which children choose to engage" (2005, p.22). Your own interests and those of your extended family offer countless

• If your basement is the main childcare space, consider using your kitchen as well, to bake or offer a new view on outdoor space – perhaps to observe home-made bird feeders and animals in your neighborhood.

opportunities for learning. And while an interest in gardening, music, weaving or cooking might originate from you or your family, as you incorporate the interests of your children and their families, everyone gains new opportunities for learning. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FIELD:

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NEW BRUNSWICK EDUCATORS REFLECT On...

Teaching and Learning:

"I've learned to play more. You really do loose track of it, especially being a new business owner... I think the curriculum taught me how to do that better...to really be in the moment with the kids..."



"Allow yourself to explore. It is a much more friendly environment for the children and for yourself when you are not worried about planning six months in advance...learning is taking place that you don't even realize!

"Realize that what works for someone else may not work for you, your center is unique and that is a good thing! Keep an open line of communication with parents. Treat all children in your care with respect and have patience!"

"It's fun to switch things around... Change the room around a little bit and see the reaction when the children come in and see the changes."

"The environment needs to be filled with their things and it doesn't have to be at their expense. I choose to enlarge their pictures and frame them because I'm into photography. Otherwise I might not do that."

"I've made a big effort to put everything at their level...except for the paint because of the babies."





SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FIELD:

Share your policy manual with your families. Discuss what you value as an educator, and what they are looking for as parents. This is a first step in getting to know them and welcoming them into your extended family.



Daily Operation and Professional Learning:

"Aim high!!! Don't think of this as just "babysitting", think of it as a real job."

"...Definitely get licensed and also keep updating your skills. I know this year we've been overwhelmed with training but generally you don't get these opportunities and that's why I've soaked up every minute of it..."

"Be professional. This is a business. Work with other community home daycares."

"Put everything you can possibly put into your handbook and make sure they're policies that you're comfortable enforcing."

"Check around and see what other small centers are charging and stay competitive. Don't just cover your own expenses. Ask for help if you need it and don't expect to get it all right the first try. Search out resources and use them!"

"Find a mentor, somebody in the field that you can talk to."

"Don't be afraid to ask questions of your inspector, they are not someone to be feared but to be supportive."







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