

# OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

LEARNING AND CARING WITH  
INFANTS AND TODDLERS

*Professional Support Document*



IMAGE OF THE CHILD

VALUING RELATIONSHIPS

VALUING FRIENDSHIPS

VALUING CULTURES

VALUING ENVIRONMENTS

VALUING OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION

WELL-BEING

PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS

COMMUNICATION AND LITERACIES

DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

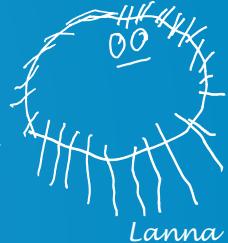
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# NEW BRUNSWICK CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ~ ENGLISH

## OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

LEARNING AND CARING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS —

*Professional Support Document*



By Enid Elliot, Emily Ashton, Anne Hunt, and Pam Nason.

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

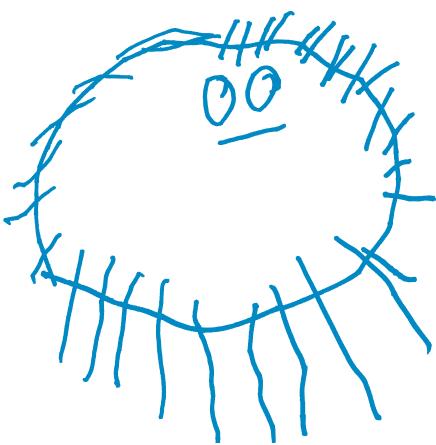
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YORK STREET CHILDREN'S CENTRE INC.

THANK YOU TO  
THE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES  
FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
THIS CURRICULUM DOCUMENT.



DEDICATED TO PAM NASON (1944-2010)  
FOR HER INSPIRATION AND COMMITMENT  
TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.



# OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN LEARNING AND CARING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

*As we travel the province to work alongside educators who are implementing the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care ~ English, we are listening. A second set of support documents, focusing on topics of interest province-wide, is a result of this ongoing dialogue with educators, children and their families.*

This support document is by and for those who work with our very youngest children. It is meant to supplement the *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care ~ English*. This means that, like the Framework, this document is values-based and upholds the vision that "all children will grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth and a zest for living and learning." Throughout this document you will find references to pages in the *Framework* and goal support documents that are particularly applicable to very young children.

Why have a document specifically for infants and toddlers? The principles and values stated in the *Framework* are for all ages; the goals of *well-being, play and playfulness, communication and literacies, and diversity and social responsibility* are as relevant to children under three as over three years of age. Moving away from the single lens of child development to a richer view of children encourages us to view children broadly rather than segregated into age categories. Still engaging with a group of babies and toddlers has unique aspects that merit a separate discussion.



Working with babies and toddlers offers joys and sometimes presents interesting challenges. From newly born to age three, changes and growth are rapid and awe-inspiring. Babies are beginning their journeys with their families, their communities, and with themselves. At birth children begin to make meaning of their journey and world. How we welcome them into this journey and into our early childhood community will contribute to their initial understandings of the world. How we welcome their families at the beginning of their journey contributes to that narrative.

This document explores, more deeply, what the broad based goals look like in the everyday life of babies and those who care for them. The importance of relationships with families, children, and educators are celebrated throughout. Additional topics such as transitions, a pedagogy of listening, environments, and documenting learning are addressed by highlighting examples from around New Brunswick. We encourage you to draw on these contributions as

*I think my role is not just the care of the child but also the care of the parents.*  
~ Sharon MacPherson  
Gagetown Military Family Resource Centre

springboards for thinking about and planning for care and learning in your unique settings.





In my work I really love watching the growth that happens. It is exciting to see this age group go from crawling to walking. Then it is exciting to watch pretend play and how it gets extended. I also am so interested in how language is growing at the same time.

~ Tammy Basque

Crafty Corner Childcare Centre

My intention is to always work in the best interest of the children by:

- Making sure I follow the interests of the children
- Making sure I include the parents and families as part of the centre
- Making sure I create a program for my children that both matches and challenges their abilities
- Ensuring the safety and well-being of the children
- Never giving up on any child
- Providing the best learning environment I can for the children
- Guiding the children as firmly as necessary, as gently as possible and always with respect
- Making sure all children are respected and included in my programming.

~ Monique Doucet  
Saint John Early Learning Centre

~ *Monique Doucet*  
Saint John Early Learning Centre



## A DISCUSSION OF TERMS



- We have used the terms baby, infant, toddler, and youngest children, interchangeably, without delineating the number of months. While these terms signify a distinct time in a person's life, it is not a definitive segment with a clear-cut beginning and ending.
- The pronouns he and she are also used indiscriminately throughout the document. This was an aesthetic choice as we wished to avoid the awkward she/he combination.
- At this point in the early childhood field, there are a number of terms used for infant and toddler educators. You may hear educator, infant/toddler caregivers, educarers (Gerber, 1979), and infant care teachers (Lally and Mangione, 2006). We have chosen to use educator, as it was the preferred term selected by New Brunswick educators through ECCENB, and also caregiver. The inclusion of caregiver allows us to highlight the notion of care. We believe that a caregiver is also concerned and cares about the learning of the infant and toddler in her care, just as a teacher is caring of the child she teaches (Noddings, 1984).



# IMAGE OF THE CHILD

## ~ INFANTS AND TODDLERS



## CONTRIBUTOR



## COMMUNICATOR



## RESILIENT



## CO-CONSTRUCTING



## RESOURCEFUL



## PROBLEM SOLVER



## CREATIVE



A child in a blue jacket and light-colored pants is interacting with a large, colorful play structure made of padded panels. The panels are red, blue, yellow, and green. The child is reaching out towards the structure. In the background, there is a small table with various items on it, and another person's legs are visible. The setting is outdoors on a grassy lawn.



## INITIATING



## INVENTIVE



## CULTURAL



## CAPABLE



# VALUING RELATIONSHIPS —

*Relationships are key to our well-being whether we are babies or adults. Through relationships we make meaning of our world, our families, our communities, and ourselves. As educators we enter into relationships with infants, toddlers and their families that are reciprocal with energy and communication flowing back and forth. Staying aware of the layers of relationships is important for providing continuous care.*



## *Relationships with INFANTS AND TODDLERS*

Very young children's well-being depends on relationships of love and care. Being cared for and about ensures a baby's safety and security. Forming a relationship with a baby or toddler takes thoughtfulness, care, and responsible intent.

**Responsible intent** — we deliberately set out to form a relationship with a baby. We must do this responsibly. We respond to the infants and toddlers we care for and our ability to respond sensitively to their delights, sorrows and concerns ensures a relationship that promotes a child's well-being and sense of belonging.

**Thoughtfulness** — reflecting on the responses of the child with whom we are developing a relationship helps us deepen and enrich that relationship.

**Care** — underlying our relationship is an attitude and ethic of care. With both head and heart this work of relationship building depends on caring.

We teach children with our very presence. Being fully present to another human being is a gift. Feeling listened to and acknowledged assures children that their voice counts and matters.



Primary caregiving is a commitment to developing in-depth relationships with a baby and that baby's family. The same person generally attends to the baby during intimate times of diapering, feeding and sleeping. Imagine for yourself being sleepy, tired, hungry, wet and imagine that a person who is familiar with you and with whom you are familiar will rock you, change you, feed you. Think how comforting it is to know this familiar person will come to help you in these intimate ways. Having a familiar person change, feed and cuddle a baby promotes a deep relationship with that person. Primary caregiving takes commitment from the whole centre. Working as a team, colleagues support each other in providing this type of care.

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Babies act on the world with their cries, gurgles, eye contact, and snuggles. When the baby receives consistent and warm responses he develops a sense of trust in his world. Being fed, changed, cuddled, rocked in a sensitive and timely manner can help the baby develop a sense of the world as a safe and welcoming place. Children will come to an early childhood program with a variety of experiences. Some children might have experienced a world of chaos and danger. They might have relationships that do not provide consistency or sensitivity. Providing a relationship they can depend on provides another glimpse of what the world can offer. Trusting that the world, the child begins to explore further and learn more about the environment and the people in it.



Learning takes place in relationships. If the earliest relationships are warm and loving, babies and young children have the best chance to make the most of the opportunities in their worlds. To learn best, children need people in their lives who:

- are warm and caring;
- know each baby or child very well and appreciate what is special about them;
- take time to understand the child's messages (cues) and to respond to them with encouragement, praise, comfort, and independence as needed; and
- are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care. ~ Marie Hammer and Pam Linke (2004, 3)

~ Marie Hammer and Pam Linke (2004, 3)



## Relationships with FAMILIES

Families with a new baby are at the beginning of their journey with that individual — a journey that continues over the years. Parents are under a great deal of pressure to be perfect parents, to raise children who are 'school ready', who are socially aware, who eat right and exercise, and much more. Finding their way through the advice and pressure must seem daunting at times.

Families, like children, have stories. These stories create layers of meaning for a family and influence their interactions with their children. When we begin to understand the stories and the meanings embedded in the stories we can appreciate the strengths that families bring to their children, their communities, and our centres.

Welcoming families into your program and learning from them what they understand about their child is the first step to working together to provide the best situation for their child. Children are part of a family network; how that network understands and children and childhood provides a foundation for your relationship with them. You are accompanying them on their journey with their children and helping them form their identity as a parent.

Miriam Rosenthal (2000, 12) writes, "Children's experiences and interactions at home and in child care are likely to be quite different." With support, children can learn to move between the two worlds of home and centre. Relationship is the key. Ronald Lally (1995, 65) says, "patterns of care should give the child a sense of connection with the home and, more importantly, communicate that where she comes from is respected and appreciated." The hope is that when caregivers and parents are working together the infant will feel the harmony, and the resulting care may be more consistent between home and child care settings.



*Some things I believe are important when welcoming new families and making families comfortable are:*

*Listen to parents and act on observations you make - just talking to parents may not be enough. They may need more information than just our daily updates.*

*Provide learning stories that detail big events in a child's life. For instance, jumping with two feet is a big accomplishment but how their first day went is also very important.*

*Go above and beyond expectations. Don't let checklists of responsibilities distract you from nurturing your growing relationships.*

*Trust yourself. You will see signs that a parent is not comfortable and it is important that you address any potential issues as soon as possible. You do not need to wait for parents to approach you.*

*Making families feel comfortable is as crucial as making the child entering into your care feel welcomed and loved.*

~ Dianna Morris Dianna's



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### *Relationships with CO-EDUCATORS*

Collaborative relationships provide a secure environment for building and strengthening relationships with families. Having colleagues with whom to share ideas and perspectives is important.

We are most effective when we feel supported. Working in relationships means feeling powerful emotions and negotiating our own histories and understandings. A crying baby can take on a variety of meanings depending on our previous experiences. To one person a baby who does not stop crying can mean failure while to another it can mean the baby is disagreeable and to yet another it can mean continuing to be patient. Colleagues can help us sort through our feelings and see different perspectives.

Common challenges such as handling tantrums, dealing with biting, and facilitating toilet learning can be negotiated and transformed through working closely with colleagues and other professionals (and families too). These conversations can help us to develop understandings and strategies that turn these challenges into respectful, responsive relationships.



Young children need professional educators who take advantage of opportunities to stretch their own minds – who engage in critical reflection on their own practice and participate in professional learning programmes.

~ Cathy Nutbrown and Jools Page (2008, 176)

### *Relationships with SELF*

We bring ourselves into each and every relationship. Reflecting on our reactions to situations and children can raise our self-awareness and open us to meaningful relationship building. Taking care of ourselves on physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels ensures that we will offer our best selves.

Relationship is at the centre of caring for infants and toddlers. Babies come with connections to their families and their communities. How caregivers handle their relationship with a baby, her family, her community has an impact on the quality of care she receives. We come to relationships with our own values, histories, communities, and connections too. We negotiate and grow together. Mary Bateson (1994, 62) says, "personhood arises from a long process of welcoming closeness and continues to grow and require nourishment over a lifetime of participation."



### *For Reflection*

How are relationships encouraged and honoured in your centre?

What can you do to promote deeper relationships with the children and families in your care?

How do you honour the uniqueness of each child and the uniqueness of each relationship?



# VALUING FRIENDSHIPS—

*Our experiences with our youngest children teach us that they are building relationships — developing friendships — with each other.*

Annabelle Godwin and Lorraine Schrag (1988, 13) remind us of the importance of those friendships to children's growing understanding of themselves as members of a community:

Babies develop friendships. They enjoy each other's company and benefit from it. When the same children are frequently together, they become increasingly interested in each other. The intensity of that interest varies from child to child and from one moment to another, and it generally increases with age. A few group activities, such as music time, help infants become aware, not only of each other but, gradually, of themselves and others as part of a group.



Throughout the day, there are many opportunities for us to support children's relationship building.

- During arrival time, welcome each child into the group by name. Call everybody's attention to the newest arrival by repeating the names of the children already present: "Here's Sara. Look Jordan and Michael, Sara wore her red shoes today."
- Encourage empathy for others by verbalizing feelings and suggesting interactions. You might say, "Jordan is sad this morning. He needs a hug. I wonder if you might bring him his stuffed toy Michael."

- Arrange the environment to promote relationship building. Seat children across from each other for snacks and meals. Playing with table toys also gives them the opportunity to see each other and to interact.
- Sing a song and dance together. Simple, short group times will help children become aware of others and themselves as part of a group.
- Provide materials that encourage interactions. For example, seesaws, wagons, balls and treasure baskets invite babies to play.



*Friendships develop over time*

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### Multi-Age Friendships

Helping a younger child put on her mitts or learning how to soothe a tired baby are real contexts in which children strengthen and practice their nurturing dispositions.

Multi-age groupings allow for such leaning to take place. And, in turn, younger children observe and emulate the caring and learning efforts of their slightly older companions.

Lilian Katz (1995)



At first glance it may seem as though babies are playing their own games near other babies without any real interaction but when you watch babies carefully you notice that they change what they are doing and watch for responses from each other. They may:

- Reach out to touch other babies;
- Look closely at other babies' faces and gestures;
- Use these cues for what to do next; and
- Use their own social signals such as smiling and crying to communicate with the other baby.

As babies reach out to touch each other, they are learning about friendships. It is important when babies play near each other that adults are close by to support them and give help when it is needed.

Marie Hammer and Pam Linke (2004, 39)



*In our documentation we include photos of all the children, mounted at eye level for them to revisit easily. They return to this particular display regularly. As the children point to each other's pictures, we say the child's name aloud. They enjoy finding and naming their friends.*

~ Linda Richardson  
A 2 Z Learning and Care Centre



### For Reflection

How does your environment and the materials in it encourage the development of friendships?

How do you share information about friendships with families?

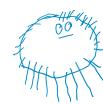
What opportunities are created for multi-age interactions? What else could be possible?

p.12



### Fostering peer relationships

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# VALUING CULTURES

*In every community there are multiple points of view and ways of approaching life. You will find diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and abilities, and we need this diversity for rich and vibrant communities.*

*With this in mind, we have a welcoming attitude to greet each child and family with curiosity about the strengths and gifts they can bring to our program. Staying aware that each child and family is different keeps us open to exploring and honouring a diversity of gifts.*

Children ground their play, their behaviours, and their explorations in their experiences. We must be careful (full of care) that we present our early childhood community as one that values each child's background and the values of his family. It is important that children do not feel they must change to be accepted.

We first learn to read the world around us through the people that we love. Some families tell stories and jokes to explain the world, other families may teach about the world through religious understandings, and still another family may demonstrate, through action, ways to negotiate the world. To one family relationship may be central to life, to another family hard work and goals are most important. All these differences create a rich community with diverse strengths and abilities. As educators we want to challenge ourselves to stay open to and knowledgeable of these different ways of approaching the world.

Depending on our own values and experiences we often have varying comfort levels with cultural differences or children with diverse abilities. Acknowledging our own discomfort or inexperience to ourselves, to our co-workers, and to the families opens us up to learning. We can learn from each family what being a parent means to them, what hopes and fears they have: we can learn with each child what abilities she can build on, what strengths she possesses, and what challenges need strategies.



Creating community is an initial step to creating local democracy. We need spaces for everyone, spaces where we can strive for democratic ideals, places where children's voices can be heard and where people are free to speak. As Peter Moss and Gunilla Dahlberg (2006, 13) write, "all children are embarked on a course of making meaning of the world" and they have "the democratic right to be listened to and to be a recognized citizen in the community". We can provide spaces for children and families where their presence is noted, their voices heard and their differences respected. We can practice "democracy as a form of living together" where there is a democratic ethos of listening and dialogue (16).

Creating an environment that pays close attention to all the voices involved can be difficult, but listening to another's point of view and responding with respect keeps our own perspective from becoming too narrow. To do so we must continually challenge others and ourselves. Listening and dialoguing, far from offering answers, can acknowledge the complexities of life and explore possibilities of a delicate balance. Creating communities based on relationships of dialogue and listening, we come a step closer to creating local democratic early childhood programs.

## *Supporting Language Diversity*

- Encourage families to maintain their child's first language in the home by sharing stories there
- Share stories in the classroom using the child's home language, if caregivers cannot speak the language, invite in people who can
- Learn and use key words in the child's home language

- Ask families to record their child's favourite songs or stories in the home language so these can be used in the program
- Have a range of books and print examples in the classroom that use children's home languages

Adapted from Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy, and Anne Stonehouse (2008, 17)

The messages our caregivers convey in words and actions reflect their cultures, beliefs, values, and attitudes... When our culture differs from that of a colleague or child and family in our program, it may create a barrier to understanding how best to support children's learning (Orange & Horowitz 1999)...Teachers and caregivers who work together can take time to reflect on and discuss questions such as the following:

- What do I believe a child can do and not do at this particular age?
- What child behaviors do I feel are acceptable and not acceptable—why?
- Should boy babies be treated differently from girl babies? If so, in what ways?
- What do I believe about how to best care for, support, and nurture the children in our program? How are my beliefs the same as or different from yours?

Reflecting on our own cultural beliefs and practices about caring, teaching, and learning can help us recognize the cultural perspective we bring to our work. Only then can we begin to address any preconceived notions that make it difficult to accept, understand, and effectively support the children and families we serve (Willis 2000).

Janice Im, Rebecca Parlakian, and Sylvia Sánchez (2007, 66)

In our documentation we include photos of all the children, mounted at eye level for them to revisit easily. They return to this particular display regularly. As the children point to each other's pictures, we say the child's name aloud. They enjoy finding and naming their friends.

~ Linda Richardson  
A 2 Z Learning and Care Centre

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~ Linda Richardson  
A 2 Z Learning and Care Centre

### *For Reflection*

What experiences do you have with families of other cultures, other faiths, and other home origins? How comfortable are you with families who have adopted children, families with two dads, grandparents raising grandchildren, families of indigenous origin? How would you include the voices of all families?



# VALUING ENVIRONMENTS



*The physical setting we create for children reflects our values, beliefs, ethics, and philosophies. An infant and toddler space can offer choices, and places for connection, communication, continuity, and stability. Valuing exploration and play we want to carefully think about how we offer materials and space.*

## INDOOR PLACES AND SPACES

Rather than creating an environment 'do and don't list', it is more effective to ask yourself questions to challenge your thinking. Being clear about your values and goals can guide your organization of space. Valuing relationships might mean insuring the diapering area is comfortable and easy to use so that an educator can focus on the child. Valuing the competent child might mean that all the tables and chairs are clearly at a size that makes it easy for babies who can move and sit to get in and out of a seat at a table. They can then choose to come and participate. They are free to move. Keeping space simple and flexible is important. Also keeping it orderly provides predictability.



Providing a space that is a pleasure to be in for both children and adults means creating a sense of beauty within that place. Peaceful colours, natural materials, and an uncluttered approach all help to make the environment a joy for all the senses. The aesthetic experience of the environment carries messages. Children appreciate beauty and attractive surroundings. If you believe children are entitled to rich and authentic experiences, avoid using cartoon characters as decoration. Real animals are majestic and powerful. Children are just learning about our world and authentic pictures are much less confusing than a cartoon that is not representative.

*Cloth tablecloths and napkins, tables and chairs of correct height, real cutlery and glasses, create a comfortable group atmosphere for learning about food and nutrition.*



Think about using pictures of children and their families; familiar images can promote a feeling of continuity with home. Children like to see pictures of themselves and their friends, around the room, in scrapbooks or framed on a shelf. Often these photos put in simple books can be a toddler's first book—a book about himself. Displaying photos or pictures can be a thoughtful process with attractive frames and at a height where children can easily see them.

*A useful exercise to assess the quality of a baby room is to lie on the floor and see how it looks from a baby's eye view. It may show up the need to make some significant changes."*

~ Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson (2004, 89)



The space for books should be comfortable for quiet book-looking, storytelling, and book sharing:

- Well-lit and away from noise and distraction
- Comfortable with soft pillows or a comfortable chair or couch

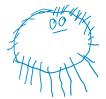
Books should be:

- Books displayed so children can see the covers
- Accessible on low shelves or in baskets
- Able to be transported to varied environments (cribs and cots, indoors and outdoors, block corner to dramatic area)

~ Adapted from Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy, and Anne Stonehouse (2008, 80)

*Consider:*

- Who will be in this space?
- What will be happening in this space?
- What materials are needed/not needed?
- Is the space flexible enough to accommodate children's changing interests and activities?
- What choices are available to the children?
  - Is the space easy to maintain?
    - Is the space orderly?
    - Is the space safe?



If you are finding a child's behaviour challenging it is essential to ask if the environment we provided might be making matters worse. Ask yourself...

- Are the chairs and tables of appropriate height?
- Are materials on shelves accessible to crawling babies?
- Am I asking toddlers to sit in a circle for too long?
- Are there enough materials to prevent grabbing and taking toys?
- Are the materials in good repair (missing puzzle pieces, markers that no longer work, etc)?
- Have I removed all objects that might make me say, 'Don't touch that'?

~ Adapted from Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson (2004, 218)



*Babies and young children need environments where they:*

- feel safe, but not overprotected to the point where experiences are unnecessarily restricted
- feel trustful that their needs will be noticed and responded to
- feel confident that their interests will be supported and valued
- feel a sense of involvement and belonging
- can be involved in enjoyable, purposeful and creative activity
- can be listened to and communicate
- can see familiar aspects of the home environment around them that they recognise, such as comfy couches, mirrors, favourite mobiles, and pictures of themselves, their families and their homes



- move between settings, such as home and [centre], with the reassurance that there will be continuity in their experiences and that individual differences will be valued and reflected in what is provided, through the resources available, through display of photographs and through carefully planned activities
- can begin to learn how to make healthy choices that support their growth and development, such as what to have for a snack, or when to put a coat on
- can develop warm and reciprocal relationships with important adults and with other children, based upon respect and acceptance
- can join in and contribute.

~ Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005, 7)



## OUTDOOR PLACES AND SPACES

Moving outdoors with children provides wonderful opportunities for babies and toddlers to experience seasonal changes and the dynamic possibilities of being in natural landscapes. The power of being in natural settings calms and engages children. Imagine a baby watching clouds drift in the sky or the leaves of a tree shift in a breeze. The pleasure and joy of feeling the warm sun or seeing the first flurry of snow creates memories for all of us. Children love to share these moments with the adults in their lives.



There is much to learn in outdoor places and spaces. Just being outside among growing and living plants, animals, and other creatures starts to build children's love of, and appreciation for, the natural world. Outside the ceiling is endless and the walls disappear; everyone can feel a sense of possibility. Very young children appreciate hills to roll down, grass to hide in, rocks to turn over, leaves to pick up, and stumps to lean upon.

Tap into your own pleasurable experiences in natural spaces - find out about the insects and bugs that you discover under logs or rocks, or stop to enjoy a multicoloured puddle found after a rain shower — all of this enriches the experience for children and yourself.

p.14



### Valuing Environments

*Take a look at 2-year-old Sophia making her way across the rocks in the backyard...this is great. The rock path gives her the chance to practice her coordination and use her large muscles. ~ Karen Clark Clark's Early Learning Program*



Infants in their teacher's arms or on a blanket enjoy the sights, smells, and sounds outdoors... Simple experiences with nature can be very powerful opportunities for teaching and learning with very young children. Observing and talking about the many sensory aspects of nature – the sounds and smells of wind and rain, changing colors of the seasons, the tastes of fruits, vegetables, and herbs – inspire interest and appreciation of the beauty of nature. Observing and talking about the animals, plants, and insects that live in our neighborhoods provokes curiosity and respect for living things. These are the kinds of experiences that 'prepare the soil' for children to desire knowledge of the natural world and ultimately of themselves in it.

~ Julia Torquati and Jana Barber (2005, 46)

## For Reflection

How can space be created for children to connect with each other?

Do you encourage independence and interdependence in the physical environment of your program?

Can you remember some of your own childhood experiences outside? What can that tell you about what young children might enjoy or learn from similar experiences?

Can you think of a place where you feel comfortable? How might you bring elements of that place into spaces for infants and toddlers?



# VALUING OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION



*We speak of the competent child, an agent of her own learning. Speaking of the child this way shifts the role of educator from being an all-knowing presence in a child's life to someone who nurtures each child's growth in a relationship of care and respect.*

*Rather than bringing a preconceived idea of what a baby is and what a baby should do, we pay attention to each child to understand that child's communicative style, interests, and strengths. In the spirit of Reggio Emilia, children use more than a hundred languages to communicate and listening to children requires that we use many languages as well. Believing in a competent child, we wonder at each child's particular path, not looking for age-related behaviours but rather seeing actions that express a child's interests and understandings. When we see the child as competent we can ask what a particular behaviour means in that child's context, for that child at that particular moment.*

*Observation is not just a skill but also an opportunity to:*

- Plan curriculum around what you observe
  - Share information about what you observe with parents and colleagues
  - Document what you observe through words, photos, and artifacts

~Leslie Allen UNB Practitioner-in-Residence

*Documentation can be a process that begins with collecting photos, narratives, and dialogues with children and families.*

*When we look carefully (full of care)  
at a child we can deepen our  
understanding of that child  
and through understanding  
find ways to deepen  
our relationship with her.*

Through observation we can begin to connect with children's learning and meaning making. Careful watching and listening enables us to see a child's interests and his approach to the world. This understanding will guide us as we build relationships with children and families. This practice of observing and listening deeply will also inform our organization of space and time. As we observe we note and document what we are seeing for the purposes of revisiting our ideas and assumptions and questioning them. What beliefs about children do we have that might interfere with our ability to see potential and possibility?

Here are some possible lenses with which to examine our observations and documentation:

- Are our beliefs about gender limiting possibilities? Are we saying, "well, that is the way boys or girls are..."?
- Are we making assumptions from a developmental point of view? Have I thought, "he should be speaking more words by now"?
- Are we assuming that a family is acting this way because "that is the way those people..."?

While each of these statements has some meaning and offers some understanding, it is necessary to go beyond gender stereotypes, developmental norms, and cultural assumptions. We can gain a richer understanding when we see that our expectations might stop us from seeing that a toddler understands everything said to him but communicates in other ways than speaking, for example. Looking from different angles can give us other possible ways to think about a child or a family and presents us with some other possible ways to communicate.

Using documentation as a basis for discussion and decision-making can be a powerful tool. Reflection within and on our practice needs to be on-going. Challenging ourselves to think carefully and deeply about what we observe, what we hear, and what assumptions we hold takes practice and time. Making time and space for reflective discussions with colleagues can help us to be deeply engaged in our practice and keep us from categorizing or labeling children. Working with colleagues to examine observations and documentation enriches practice and keeps program planning and thinking dynamic.

It is vital to realize that documentation is much more than observation. It involves reflection, connecting the observations to a knowledge base of theory, and communication. Documentation involves co-construction of an experience, and consequently, is far removed from the objectivity and implied accuracy of traditional child observation. But... observation and recording are key beginning points for documentation. ~ Sue Fraser (2002, 137)

### Observe for change

*The children in my care were often stuck to me like glue and hesitant to engage in what I planned until I did it myself. But as they grew physically and mentally I would observe them taking more initiative to try new things on their own without my direction especially outdoors. They would cautiously travel in close proximity to me but as they gained more confidence they would dash away from me playing on their own or with someone close by. When I started noticing this change I knew that they were ready to move up to the next group in our centre.*

~Dianna Morris Dianna's

### Respectfully display children's work



### Collect an assortment of documentation for each child



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INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY



## *Document to build relationships*

Posted on the display board are different songs about balls that I sing with the children. Our displays of the songs and the pictures and documentation of the children allow the parents to see what the children are doing and learning through this adventure. As the parents drop the children off each morning I discuss the activities of the previous day and show them the displays. I have noticed that the parents now come directly into the classroom each morning to hear about their child's learning experience from the previous day. I look forward to our chats.

~ Monique Doucet Saint John Early Childhood Centre



SAME IMAGE AS ON P.20

## *Document to record milestones: First Words or A First Day*

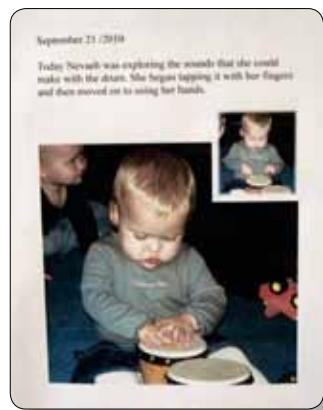
As educators hear infants say words, they document the words spoken (or attempted!), the date, their name, and a short description of the circumstances. When the infants move to the toddler room, their documentation moves with them. Before we know it the First Words sheets are full!

~ Saint John Early Childhood Centre

Sasha			
Date	Word	Comment	Staff
Aug 10 2019	Up	Raised his hands	Monique
Aug 11	Baby	Sasha pointing at a baby in the room	Monique
Aug 13	Emily	He pointed at Emily and said "Emily" when I asked him to point at a person	Monique
Aug 15	Ball	Pointed at a ball in the room	Monique
Aug 18	Happy	When I asked him how he was, he said "Happy" and "Yay!"	Monique
	Hot	Pointed at a fan	Monique



### *Document individual and group stories*



*Document everyday  
moments of joy  
and laughter*



## VALUING OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION –



*Document sequences and processes:* This shift from recording a snapshot of an activity towards documenting a process was a significant development for me in learning how to create more complex documentation. I was beginning to produce documentation that captured greater depth and breadth of experience. ~ Alice C.Y.Wong (2008, 34)

## *Document to support planning*

## Document over time

The children use the same canvas for several painting explorations. After each occasion, we hang their canvas up for all to see. The next time we paint, we take their canvas down so they can continue creating their work-of-art. We record our observations adding another bit of documentation after each experience. In this picture the babies have each had two turns at their canvases. The documentation shows their learning over time and makes visible the different tools and techniques (fingers, brushes, sponges) they have tried.

~Monique Doucet Saint John Early Childhood Centre



## *Document to support transitions*

## *For Reflection*

How do you make time and space to observe your toddlers at play?

What tools do you use for documenting?  
What other ideas do you have? What new formats would you like to try?

How do you share your documentation with children, families, and colleagues?

How does documentation influence your planning? Think about decisions to add new materials, reconfigure the environment, etc.



## **p.63 Documentation and assessment**

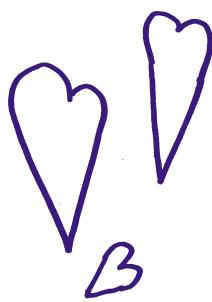
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p. 63



## Documentation and assessment





# WELL-BEING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS



SENSE OF SELF

p.76  Liam takes initiative

p.10  Patty's sign language

SENSE OF OTHER



p.80  Sally experiences compassion



SENSE OF PLACE

p.21  Jane's community walks

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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY • COMMUNICATION • INDIVIDUALITY





RESPECTFUL AND  
RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

p.22



Jennifer's family blocks



PERSONAL CARE

p.30



Children participate in routines



p.38



Angela's open snack



p.40



Donna's muffin making

FOOD AND  
NUTRITION



BODY AND  
MOVEMENT



p.94



Evan takes a healthy risk

p.46



Shelby and the slide

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## Routines and Rituals

During the routines of the day we initiate and grow our relationships with young children. For babies, routines are the framework of the day giving shape to time. Often routines are seen as a task to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible, but we can approach them as opportunities for learning. Within routines infants learn to help and respond; toddlers learn to anticipate and participate. As the child's involvement deepens, the routine becomes a dance of caregiver and child.

If we use the word *rituals* instead of *routines* we might shift our thinking and approach these times of one-to-one connection with children in a spirit of reverence. One definition says that reverence is to regard with affectionate respect. An approach all of us would appreciate.



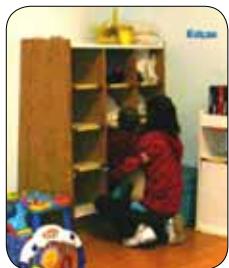
### Routines are curriculum

#### Routines:

- Ensure daily needs are met
- Help establish rhythms
- Provide consistency
- Promote predictability
- Develop memory
- Build trust
- Encourage familiarity
- Offer playtime
- Make moments for turn-taking
- Give chances to communicate
- Allow for engaging the senses
- Inspire confidence

~ *Leslie Allen*  
UNB Practitioner-in-Residence

Infants and toddlers have a different sense of time than the one we impose on our day. Staying aware of this makes working with very young children easier. How time is organized is arbitrary; different societies order the day differently. As we create our early childhood community we create a schedule that makes the day flow as smoothly as possible. But we can change the length of time spent outdoors or when lunch is available or when a child goes to sleep in response to the needs and desires of the children. Also, keeping long transitions to a minimum makes sense. No one likes to wait and young people see little sense in it.



*Children take comfort in routines where they can anticipate what comes next.*

*This comfort builds confidence and encourages children to participate in these same routines.*

Taking time to thoughtfully discuss what meaning you want routine activities or rituals to have can make you more conscious of your goals. What meaning might children make of a setting that changes everyone's diapers at the same time as opposed to a program that knew when a baby needed changing and responded? What does a child learn when someone greets his mother and him warmly, asking how their night was and if he had brought his favourite stuffy? While ensuring that we are organizing our day to make our practice flow smoothly are we thinking about what meaning the children will take from how we approach the schedule and tasks of the day?

*The rituals of diapering, feeding, and sleeping are times of communication and learning. Within a familiar relationship, routines are times of talking, explaining, and interacting in order to build trust, a sense of other, and cooperation. We use routines to listen to the child, to explain the process to the child, and eventually, to do the routine with the child participating and helping.*

p.34



Maria's visual routine

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## *Toileting Rituals*

Learning to use the toilet (or toilet learning) has become a more popular description because it implies that the child participates in the learning process. The question then becomes not "When should I begin toilet training?" but rather, "Is this child ready to begin using the toilet?" Some other questions to consider before a child can begin to actively participate in learning to use the toilet:

- Does she stay dry for several hours at a time?
- Has he fully mastered walking?
- Is she able to sit down and get up with ease?
- Can he communicate by sign, sound or word the need to use the toilet?
- Does she indicate when her diaper needs changing?



When parent and provider agree that the time has come to begin the toilet learning process, arrange a meeting to discuss how both provider and parent can support the child in this important learning endeavor.

~ Adapted from Phyllis Lauritzen and JoEllen Tullis (1988, 17)

## *Brooklyn's Learning Adventures*

*I had no intentions of starting Brooklyn's potty sessions until summer because I thought I would only be able to truly dedicate the "all day" time then. When Brooklyn started to show interest over the Christmas break I was very excited. When we came back after the break Tammy shared that other children were showing interest too so the Potty Journey took off full force.*

*One weekend, Brooklyn had to go to the washroom so I took her down to my bathroom and I started looking for her potty seat. She told me "Don't need seat. I'm big girl." I was very surprised but followed her directions and sat her on the seat. I started to hold her and she said, "Don't need help. Tammy show me." Wow – she really did know how to hold herself up without falling down. I was so impressed. She ended with, "Mommy so happy, Daddy so happy, Tammy so happy, Sarah so happy..." Yes, we are all "SO HAPPY!"*

*Brooklyn also shared that her friends could do the same. The daycare experience is so rewarding because as parents we are constantly learning from our children the new adventures they have experienced as well as the new accomplishments they have achieved.*

Proud Mama, Lori [mother's last name]

n-34



## Communicating with parents

### Develop Continuity with Home Routines:

Anna had started daycare and was settling in very nicely, playing and eating well. However, going to sleep was difficult. In talking with the parents over a few days I discovered that Anna sleeps on a special pillow at home. I asked mom to bring it in the next day. Bingo! She slept for two hours.

~ Jean Robinson Lincoln Day Care Centre



## *Routines*

*and rituals reflect cultural values and beliefs.*

*However, we must be cautious not to draw generalizations as there is much variance within cultures as well. Find out about each family's particular preferences and practices.*

## *For Reflection*

Can you look at your routines and see space for children's voices?  
Are there more places where they can participate?

Thinking of our daily schedules, are there places we can simplify the day?

How are routines times for learning and building relationships? How can this be improved?





## *Building Bridges*

Welcoming a baby or toddler in the morning and saying goodbye at the end of the day are two important rituals. These times are important transitions for a child; the move from home to the wider community and back again are delicate times. Feeling welcomed in a manner that respects the child and their family, as well as time taken to say farewell can help a child develop a sense of community. The following interview with parents David and Gillian Yeomans, director Linda Richardson, and early childhood educator Irene Copeland tells the story of how one centre facilitates smooth transitions for Austin as she begins and ends her day.

## What strategies do you use to welcome families and children?

*Irene: I greet Austin, David and Gillian with a smile. I welcome and talk to Austin as they enter. Austin's smile or giggle lets me and her parents know that she is comfortable. I think this makes a better workday for her parents. I take Austin into the room and our day begins.*

*I engage Austin in activities by providing different toys for her and showing her what the toys do. When singing a song or playing music Austin and the other children clap or dance while looking at each other.*

**How do you inform Gillian and David about Austin's daily experiences? At the end of the day how do you facilitate leave-taking?**

*Linda: Parents are always encouraged to visit the centre at any time. Our doors are always open. Parents, at pick up time, are told about their child's day. This includes eating, napping, and playtime. We provide a bright, safe, loving and nurturing atmosphere in which children are able to express their individual needs.*

Irene: When Gillian or David picks Austin up at the end of the day we encourage them to observe. We let them know how she slept and if she has had a good day. We share pictures

that have been taken. We get Austin's bag and try to make sure that everything is in there for them. I wave goodbye and talk to her before she goes, always resulting in a shared smile.

**How does Austin communicate her feelings?  
How are you building a responsive relationship  
during transition times?**

Irene: One way Austin communicates her feelings is through laughter. She claps and dances when you sing to her. We play music in the room and we play with the children. Austin may get fussy when she is hungry or tired. I find that changing toys works well to keep her interested in play. Cuddling her when she crawls to you is a great feeling; just to know she has trust in us makes my day.

Linda: Each child has his or her own unique communication style. Once you are familiar with the child you learn to recognize their behaviour patterns. Austin is a very happy baby. She does not cry a lot. The only time she sometimes cries is close to lunch. She loves to be cuddled and we love to cuddle her. She loves music. She has a lot of facial expressions. Sometimes just eye contact is enough for Austin. We love having her at our centre; she is always a bright light. She gets lots of hugs and kisses.



*Transitions are part of everyone's life. Developing nurturing transitions also helps children begin to understand the notion of healthy goodbyes - a life skill they will take with them as they grow.* ~ Emily J. Adams and Rebecca Parlakian (2010, 55)



**What were you looking for in a centre?**

*Gillian and David: We sought educators who are interactive with the children and involved with the parents. A bright, fun physical environment was also important. And steady routines - Austin likes to know what is coming next. On Austin's first day we gave a copy of our own routine to Linda as well as some notes about Austin.*

**What makes you comfortable leaving Austin in the morning?**

*Gillian: When she sees Linda, Irene, or Doris she gives a big smile. One morning I dropped Austin off and she went crawling straight over to another little boy - I knew she'd be fine!*

**At pick up time do you feel that you get a sense of how Austin's day has been?**

*Gillian: I try to watch her for a few minutes before I go in and she's usually playing with the other children or hanging out on someone's lap. I always get a rundown of her day, how she slept, played outside, etc. Austin's usually very tired after a full day of playing.*

~ Irene Copeland, Linda Richardson, and Gillian and Richard Yeomans

A 2 Z Learning and Care Centre



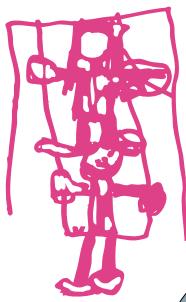
*The Farewelling Flower*

*Our toddlers love to water and take care of our plants. They show great respect for our plants in the classroom. We had a geranium in our window that was starting to bloom and everyday Curtis, Jayden, Jessica, Cale and Brooklyn checked to see how it was growing. Counting the blooms on the geranium became a transition strategy for the children in the morning. Some days there are children in our group who have a hard time leaving their families and the flower was a diversion for them. Each morning they arrived eager to see if there were new blooms and to count them.*

~ Tammy O'Neill Chatham Day Care Center

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# PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS



USE FLEXIBLE  
AND FLUID THINKING

INVENT SYSTEMS  
OF REPRESENTATION



p.7 Toddlers explore sand and water



EXPLORE PROPERTIES  
OF OBJECTS



TEST LIMITS

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NEGOTIATE JOINT  
UNDERTAKINGS

p.112 Ryan includes everyone



CREATE IMAGINARY SCENARIOS

p.14 Toddlers play dress-up



BEING  
ON THE  
EDGE

p.39 Tammy and Sarah's dizzy play



p.40 Angie's block building observations

APPROACHES TO  
PRACTICAL PROBLEMS



SHARING THE JOY OF LAUGHTER



p.120 Lane clowns around

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## Choosing Materials

Everything we do with children reflects our attitudes, beliefs and values. The activities we organize and materials we present also reflect our values about children. We must choose thoughtfully and carefully. We are inundated with commercial information about the best activities, toys and books for babies. Marketing towards parents is fierce, playing on their desires to do what's best for their children.

*Singing,  
dancing,  
talking,  
clapping,  
laughing,  
touching,  
moving,  
comforting:*

*Our bodies  
are powerful,  
interactive  
teaching and  
learning  
tools...*

Valuing children as active learners, engaged in making meaning of the world, we offer materials that invite exploration and imaginative play. Too many activities and toys for babies and toddlers encourage them to sit and watch passively. Think of the toy that has buttons for different sounds—press a button and the cow moos. How much more dynamic is it to sit with a child and talk about the cow and perhaps together make moo noises? A baby or toddler (even an educator!) does not understand how the button works to produce sound.

Toys should be simple. Babies' first toys are their hands and feet and the bodies of the people who care for them. After exploring



their hands they want to experience what they can do with their hands. We can provide simple objects to hold, to feel, to taste. These allow for children's imagination and creativity. Manufactured toys that do something when activated encourage passive behaviours on the part of babies; we prefer active babies to active toys. Magda Gerber (2002,101) recommends play objects that "do nothing... the best play objects are those which allow infants to be as active and competent as possible at every stage of development."

The educator's interest and presence is key to the children's explorations. We must watch carefully and observe children's explorations and their interests. Deciding how to build on the children's skills and pleasure directs subsequent presentations. Joining the baby or toddler, whether in conversation or just as an interested quiet observer, provides the child with an available companion.



### About Peek-a-boo

Suspense games, like peek-a-boo, nurture the development of object permanence — the understanding that objects still exist even when they are out of sight. Peek-a-boo games also symbolically teach that even when a special adult is not seen, that dear person will reappear.

~ Alice Sterling Honig (2010, 44)

Other games: • I'm-gonna-getcha • Tickle the tummy • Walking fingers





*Treasure Baskets...*

- contain a variety of objects for babies to explore, such as ribbons, balls, soap holders, and tins of different sizes, etc;
- support very young children's explorations;
- encourage babies to become comfortable alongside one another; limit the number of infants involved to 3 so they can sit close enough to easily reach into the basket.



*Contents are...*

- varied and expanded as children's interests are observed and noted;
- mouthing, shaken, rolled, dropped, and examined
- cleaned regularly; washable, wipeable, or disposable items are best;
- natural materials, limit the number of store bought toys or plastic items;
- selected with safety in mind.



*Adults should...*

- organize the objects to be presented and plan new objects to introduce;
- ensure significant time and space are available for sustained, uninterrupted explorations;
- stay close by, quietly and attentively observing.

*Choose materials that excite the Senses:  
Touch, Smell, Taste, Sound, Sight.*



*From bells and magnets to sponges and sandpaper, the infants found rough things, soft things, stretchy things, and shiny things. ~ Tammy O'Neill Chatham Day Care Center*



*For Reflection*

What types of objects might be of interest to children to explore? What might you add to a treasure basket?

In choosing items for treasure baskets, how would you ensure that all families are included and represented?

p.22,23



Sound baskets and heuristic play

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## *Documenting Play*

What happens when we wonder along with children? Monique Doucet shares selections from a larger series of documentation about her infants' ball project. Intertwined with her observations are reflective pieces in which Monique repeatedly asks herself what the children are learning and what peaks their interests.

Monique's work makes visible the power of observation and documentation to guide planning and also the rich learning possibilities of play.



## Initial Observations

The project that the infant group has been working on this month began when I noticed Nolan playing intently with a ball. After that, I started noticing other children exploring balls in many different ways.

Nolan was rolling a ball that made giggling noise and he began laughing as the ball made sounds. As I watched him I wondered what it was about this adventure that made him smile and laugh. Was it the movement of the ball as it rolled across the floor? Was it the sound the ball made? Was it the bright neon color of the ball that attracted him?

I also observed Nevaeh as she was rolling a textured ball across the floor. She appeared so consumed in the movement of the ball. She would roll it a little and watch as the different bumps of the ball hit the floor. I wondered what she was wondering about. Again I asked myself what might it be about balls that maintains the interests of these infants?

## Learning in Play

In the gym we put out a large exercise ball. Jarvis smiled and ran over to it. He began rolling the ball through the gym. Activities like these will be great for Jarvis as he uses the large muscles in his arms and legs to roll the ball around the gym. He is also working his hand and eye coordination as he moves the ball around other objects and children in the gym. Jarvis is learning social skills too – he learns turn-taking with the other children as they share the balls.

*Nolan is learning to throw a ball. We encourage him to toss the ball to us and we toss it back to him. He is also discovering how to kick the ball. I have been showing him how with a soccer ball. Nolan is working on balance and coordination as he learns to kick the ball with one foot.*



## Extending Play

I have been looking for new ways for the children to explore their interests in balls. While the children were napping, I placed a basket full of small balls into the center of the room. Upon waking, the children found the balls quickly.

Nolan began tossing the balls out of the basket and laughing and it did not take long for Jarvis to join in. Nevaeh soon crawled over to see what they were doing. She followed the lead of the other children in tossing the balls. The social interaction between the children grew as they tossed the balls at each other while laughing.



More Learning

The children used their problem solving skills as they found a way to get the balls onto the floor quickly by dumping out the contents of the entire basket. Why – perhaps for easier access or maybe to just be able to watch them fall?

Nolan has now figured out that the ball basket is large enough to climb into. This shows that he already shows some understanding about the concept of size. The other children also wanted to climb into the basket with Nolan but obviously they could not all fit into the basket so I helped them out by emptying some other baskets of toys so that they could each have a basket to get into.

Wondering Along

The children explored with clay formed into balls. I wondered if they would treat the clay in the same manner as the other balls. Would they try to toss the balls? Would they notice the texture of the clay and the fact that they can change the shape of these balls?

Having watched the children explore the clay I think that Jarvis did in fact treat them like the other balls. He repeatedly rolled the clay balls across the table.

Nolan seemed to notice a difference in the texture of the clay compared to other balls he's been exploring. He squeezed the clay balls to change their shape and stacked them on top of each other.



Nevaeh treated the clay as food and was only interested in trying to eat it. Was this because she was seated at the dining table while playing with the clay? Maybe she would have reacted differently if the clay had been placed on the floor with her instead.

It has been fascinating to observe the infant's explorations of balls. What's next? I'll continue to wonder along with the children...

~ Monique Doucet Saint John Early Childhood Centre



## Playing with Balls



For Nevaeh, we placed several balls of different shapes and textures in the room to see which caught her attention. There was a round soft fuzzy ball, a round ball, and a brightly colored football. The round ball didn't seem to interest her for very long. Next she moved on to the fuzzy ball for a few minutes. But the true winner was the brightly coloured football. She kept picking it up and feeling the shape and watching it move as she rolled it across the floor.

Why is it that balls seem to interest children so much?

- Is it the round shape of the balls?
- Is it the way balls roll or bounce?
- Is it the textures of the balls?
- Is it the color of the ball?



## Playing with Balls



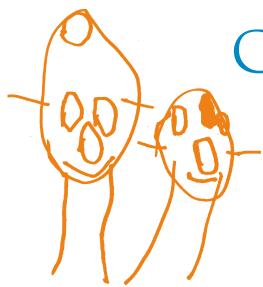
Today Jarvis is visiting our school gym for the first time. He found a beach ball to play with.

He smiles as he places the ball onto the various gym equipment. He watches closely as it rolls off onto the floor. It is almost as though he is observing gravity and motion.



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# COMMUNICATION AND LITERACIES—

## WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS



FORM RELATIONSHIPS

p.124



Gavin sings a lullaby



LEARN CONVENTIONS  
OF THEIR LANGUAGES

p.15



Cassidy does Twinkle, Twinkle

EXTEND IDEAS AND TAKE  
ACTIONS USING LANGUAGE

p.132



Mingi communicates his interests



p.32



Educators make books

ENGAGE IN MULTIMODAL  
MEANING MAKING

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34

OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN ~ LEARNING AND CARING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS



USE A VARIETY OF SIGN SYSTEMS

p.40



Children have a jam session



CO-CONSTRUCT LITERATE IDENTITIES

p.148



Parents share photos from home

RE-INVENT  
POPULAR CULTURE

USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

p.58



Abby plays with the keyboard



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## Forming Meaningful Relationships

In our early childhood programs we strive to create an inclusive, nurturing, and supportive culture. Thoughtful communication with others is key to co-constructing this culture. Our interactions with children convey meanings and values. Engaging in authentic dialogues, acknowledging what is unfolding at the time for us and for them, sends a message of respect.

Conversation that happens in an authentic and caring context is more meaningful and more engaging than talking for the sake of talking. When we speak to a baby while diapering and feeding her, explaining the actions in which we are mutually engaged, we have her attention. We share a focus together and together we can participate in learning.

Children also need to see their culture reflected in the culture of the program. Recognizing different styles of communication and different ways of interacting creates a welcoming environment that includes all families and children. We join babies in exploring their interests and collaborate with them as they learn about the world. Knowing that someone will listen and that they will listen deeply, not busy with their own thoughts or other tasks, helps grow meaningful relationships.

Entering into a relationship requires responsiveness and responsibility. Being responsible we are answerable to someone else—we are building a participatory relationship of trust and cooperation with a child. We do this by responding seriously and carefully, aware that we are always finding our way towards understanding a child. Our communication with children will be non-verbal as well as verbal. Our touch, our way of moving, our sighs, our laughs, and our expressions will tell the children a great deal about how we are responding to them.

Babies act on the world with their cries, gurgles, eye contact, and snuggles. When the baby receives consistent and warm responses he develops a sense of trust in the world. How



we respond to crying, smiling, cooing, murmuring, and gurgling can give him the sense that he is connected and safe, that his existence matters to someone. When a baby cries and someone answers her she begins to develop a sense that her communication matters. When she smiles and someone takes delight in that smile she sees herself as having an impact.

There are multiple ways to communicate, multiple literacies, multiple ways of expressing insights, and multiple ways of understanding the world. As children experience using multiple modes of expression — visual, expressive, social, emotional, artistic, musical, dramatic — they develop vocabularies and skills that will support them throughout their lives.

As educators, we can respond to infants and toddlers by listening carefully and thoughtfully and responding as sensitively and consistently as we are able. Babies make meaning of the responses of the people in their world. They develop feelings of where they belong and what it means to belong. Learning about the world through interactions with others, babies begin to define the meaning of relationships for their lives.

p.6



Form relationships



## *Touch*

Touch is essential in all of our lives; touching connects a child to his body and pulls him into relationship. We all respond to warm and comforting touches and touch can soothe a crying baby or a distraught child. When we touch another we know the other feels a touch at the same time we feel the touch.

In our work with babies and toddlers we come into physical contact regularly. Through touch our relationships with young children grow and through touch we learn about each other. A baby falling asleep in our arms and a toddler relaxing in a hug is a good feeling. The baby or toddler trusts us enough to accept the comfort of our touch. Moments like these strengthen the relationship between educator and child.

Making sure we are responding to the infant or toddler's need for touch and not our own need is necessary. As caregivers we want to promote the child's feeling of safety and security in our care; as we promote this feeling in the child we are also strengthening our own connection to the child. In this process we must continually reflect on our own responses to a child and to a family to be sure that we are following the child's lead into a relationship.



Infants are competent communicators. Before they can speak, they use and imitate body language, including facial expressions (Barton & Brophy-Herb, 2006). Anyone working with infants and toddlers is familiar with their efforts to get their messages across, even when their language skills are not very developed: an insistent tug on the arm, a sloppy kiss, or a cry of fright are just a few of the communication strategies that we encounter and interpret when we work with very young children. Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy, and Anne Stonehouse (2008, 15)

*And if ever I touched a life  
I hope that life knows  
that I know that  
touching was and still is  
and will always be  
the true revolution.*

~ Nikki Giovanni (1972, *"When I Die"*)

*Listening not just  
with our ears, but  
with all our senses...*

Listening to the hundred, the thousand languages, symbols and codes we use to express ourselves and communicate... Listening is emotion... Listening as welcoming... Listening is not easy. It requires deep awareness and at the same time a suspension of our judgements and above all our prejudices; it requires openness to change.

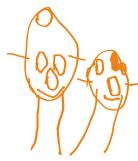
~ Carlina Rinaldi (2006, 65)

### *For Reflection*

What are your styles of communication? What is your cultural background and how does it influence your communication style?

How can you learn to broaden your own understanding of the children in your program and the communication styles they are bringing to relationships?





## Literacy Learning in the Everyday

From stories on radio and television to pleas from politicians and schools, we often hear warnings of low literacy rates and the urgent need for school readiness. This public focus can make families (and us too) a little apprehensive about children's literacy learning. Sometimes we get asked, "Why aren't you teaching children to recognize numbers?" or told, "It's never too early to learn the alphabet". Our responses must be carefully thought out and experientially practiced. We need to reassure families that literacy practices embedded in our everyday comings and goings are teaching their children much about literacies.

Relate how the conversations, stories, rhymes, chants and songs that fill our days teach the joys of language. Share with families how on walks we point out letters on signs, count the ducks in the pond, read symbols on storefronts, and recite numbers on mailboxes. Encourage families to borrow books that we made with and for the children. Invite parents into our purposefully planned environment so that they can witness the richness of everyday literacy learning firsthand. Explain how numeracy concepts like shape, height, weight, balance, and volume are practiced as toddlers build block towers and pour water through funnels. Post song lyrics and short poems on white boards so they can be sung on the way home. Display artefacts from the children's mark-making creations around the centre. Document learning. And most importantly - listen and learn from each other.



A rainbow  
By Jack



The language of rhymes, stories, and songs often includes words or phrases that people do not use in everyday conversations. This helps children build their vocabularies, and they frequently reveal in quaint and startling ways their knowledge of a word or phrase that adults might not expect them to know. Here's a classic example of unique expressions children might learn by interacting with stories:

Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown  
And Jill came tumbling after.  
Up Jack got and home did trot  
As fast as he could caper.  
He went to bed and fixed his head  
With vinegar and brown paper.

Most children today would be unfamiliar with many of this nursery rhyme's words and phrases, such as crown for head or trot for run. Still, the plot, characters, and rhythm of the story have interested many generations of children.

Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy,  
and Anne Stonehouse (2008, pg 104)



## *Language Play*

We can play with rhythm, rhyme, sound and movement to the delight of infants and toddlers. Recite poems, rhymes, songs, chants, and stories that are imaginative, playful, and humorous. Even if infants do not understand the meaning of all words, the rhythm and tone of language and the enthusiasm of the adult who speaks it will still enchant them. New words are discovered and vocabulary learned as we use language intently throughout the day.

Games and rhymes that include gestures and touch support the development of relationships and the learning of language. Multimodal meaning making results from the combination of rhythm and rhyme with the physical experience.

*This little piggy went to market,  
This little piggy stayed home,  
This little piggy had roast beef,  
This little piggy had none,  
And this little piggy went  
"Wee, wee, wee," all the way home.*

*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's pan  
Bake me a cake as fast as you can  
Pat it and roll it and mark it with a "B"  
Put it in the oven for baby and me.*



## Sharing Stories

Reading with two or three children strengthens relationships. Physical closeness encourages interactions — children can point to pictures, talk to each other, and cuddle comfortably close to you.

Young children should be encouraged, but never forced, to listen to stories. We want to cultivate a love of reading so these early shared moments must be enjoyable. Invite babies to join in but don't worry when the whole story doesn't get finished. Children will let us know if they're interested; we've all had babies toddle off mid-story. To nourish curiosity, try strategies such as talking about the book instead of reading it word for word, asking questions about the story events, making connections to the listeners' experiences, changing stories or skipping to a favourite page, and adding funny voices and exclamatory tones. Stories with repetitive phrases for the children to repeat aloud or movements for the children to enact are especially intriguing.



The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who is reading aloud — it's the relationship winding between the three, bringing them together in easy harmony. ~ Mem Fox (2001, 10)





## Book Making

Hand-made books are wonderful resources. Not only do such books help to build relationships with children and families but these narratives also support children in developing a positive sense of self and other.

Make books that

- Contain pictures of children and their families
- Story events and objects that children are experiencing
- Recount shared experiences (like the *Red Walk* book)
- Are small enough for tiny hands to hold (like the *Small* book)
- Are three dimensional (like the *What's in my Pocket* book)
- With objects to feel, hold, smell, touch...

p.32



Multimodal books



## Beginning Relationships: Our Welcome Books

*When children join our centre we ask families to bring in pictures so we can make their child a welcome book. In Cameron's book we included pictures of her extended family in addition to pictures of her new friends in the centre. We purposefully choose to make fabric books so the infants can chew, throw, mouth and manipulate them. No pages get torn and we can wash the books in the washing machine.*  
~ educators

Kids Choice Toddler Centre



*What behaviours might we observe when young children interact with books?*

### Handling Books

Babies physically manipulate and interact with books by looking at pictures, waving books in the air, helping adults turn pages, and rotating the book to turn images.

### Reading Pictures

Young children engage with pictures in books by pointing to familiar objects, laughing and smiling at favourite pictures, and repeatedly asking, "Dat?" or "What's that?"

### Comprehending Stories

Infants and toddlers demonstrate their understanding of story content by making sounds and gestures, indicating story and page preferences, connecting real objects in their environment to elements of the story (goes to get a toy duck after seeing a picture of one in a book), and imitating actions mentioned in stories.

### Reading Stories

Young children show an awareness of print by pointing to letters, drawing their fingers from left to right, turning pages when reading to themselves, using book babble to read stories to their favourite stuffy, and reciting favourite phrases.

Adapted from Judith A. Schickedanz (1986, 23-27)



## Mark-Making

- Provide a variety of multimodal mark-making tools
- Create a symbol rich environment (images of people, animals, buildings, signs, letters, labels, etc.)
- Engage together with babies to make marks



Barely able to crawl! Torrie makes his mark! He is very interested in the crayon and seems fascinated at how it leaves marks behind.

6 months

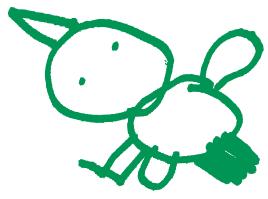
The children watch each other in amazement as they leave Chalk Marks on the page!

Jessica is just over 1 year old. She is making her mark with Chalk and erasing it with a dry cloth. She likes to see the colour on the page and watches it disappear as she wipes!

There is no reason why we can't bring the chalk fun outside with us. Now we can make chalk marks on the fence and the patio blocks!

Infants/Toddlers enjoy making their marks. They admire their work and each other's work. They enjoy standing, moving about with their chalk and dancing with delight at their accomplishments!





# DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY —

## WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS



p.21  **A helping hand**

### ACT AS RESPONSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE CITIZENS



*Learning turn-taking*

### PRACTICE FAIRNESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



### ACT TO CHANGE INEQUITABLE PRACTICES

p.162  **Chris stands up for himself**



### PARTICIPATE IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM



*Choosing Paint colours*



*Preparing her bed*

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DEVELOP A SENSE OF WONDER

p.172



Toddler's explore the outdoors



p.58



Leisa and Stephanie's church project



RECOGNIZE PATTERNS IN NATURE



p.34

Sammy and the flowers



p.47



Karen, Rachel, and Elizabeth use cloth diapers

PRACTICE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
AND SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY



LEARN ABOUT  
NATURAL RESOURCES



p.43

Toddler meet Bob the Builder



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## Negotiating Tensions

Strong relationships and rich environments contribute to creating vibrant communities. But nothing is perfect and within a community there are tensions...there are always decisions to be made and there are uncomfortable places of disagreement. To pretend that it is an easy task to form relationships and create lovely, lively environments would be misleading. There are always judgments to be made and there are tensions to be felt, to learn from, and to dissolve. We cannot ignore tensions or uncertainties; they arise for reasons we must attend to. But in negotiating differences, there are also possibilities for great growth.

*Inclusion is about working closely with parents and carers, being able to take different approaches to fit individual circumstances and valuing that everyone involved with children and families has an important contribution to make, particularly the child and the families themselves.*

~ Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005, 3)

To negotiate tensions and uncertainties we need to work with a level of trust in our colleagues and gather support from them. It can be difficult to be with a fussing baby for a long time and it is reassuring to know we have a thoughtful and caring support system. We can also cultivate an attitude of welcome that sees difficult times as places for opportunity. We need to try to understand why we are feeling anger or sadness or why we are disagreeing with a colleague or a family. We can look for paths through these feelings and tensions.

When we work within relationship we are not technicians or robots without feelings, without histories, without beliefs and values. Our own tightly held beliefs, our own histories, our own emotions enter into our relationships all the time. This is not bad - it makes us who we are, we cannot be perfect - but we can reflect together with our colleagues, gather support, and plan strategies.

We can understand that crying makes us uncomfortable because we were always told to stop crying or that crying was for babies or that....you can fill in the blank. Crying is meant to evoke reaction, it is a baby's way of communicating. But with life's experiences we have constructed our own meaning of crying. Our community has its own reactions to crying: "no use crying over spilt milk", "crybaby", "you'll spoil her if you pick her up." We can create new meanings and understandings that might promote our community vision more fully and inclusively. When we are uncomfortable it is a signal to pay attention. Why are we uncomfortable? How might we look at this situation or our feelings differently?

Reflecting on our own feelings and sharing them with colleagues can help us broaden our emotional reactions. This can become research when we decide as a community to wonder together about something. Research means to look again - to re-examine. When we do this with a group we can wonder together why a baby is having a difficult time.



Georgia

Our documentation gives us a common discussion topic through which we can collect other perspectives in order to understand a broader picture. Having other caregivers to discuss concerns, tensions, or hard feelings with helps to give depth and richness to the picture. We can co-question our practices and enrich our programs.

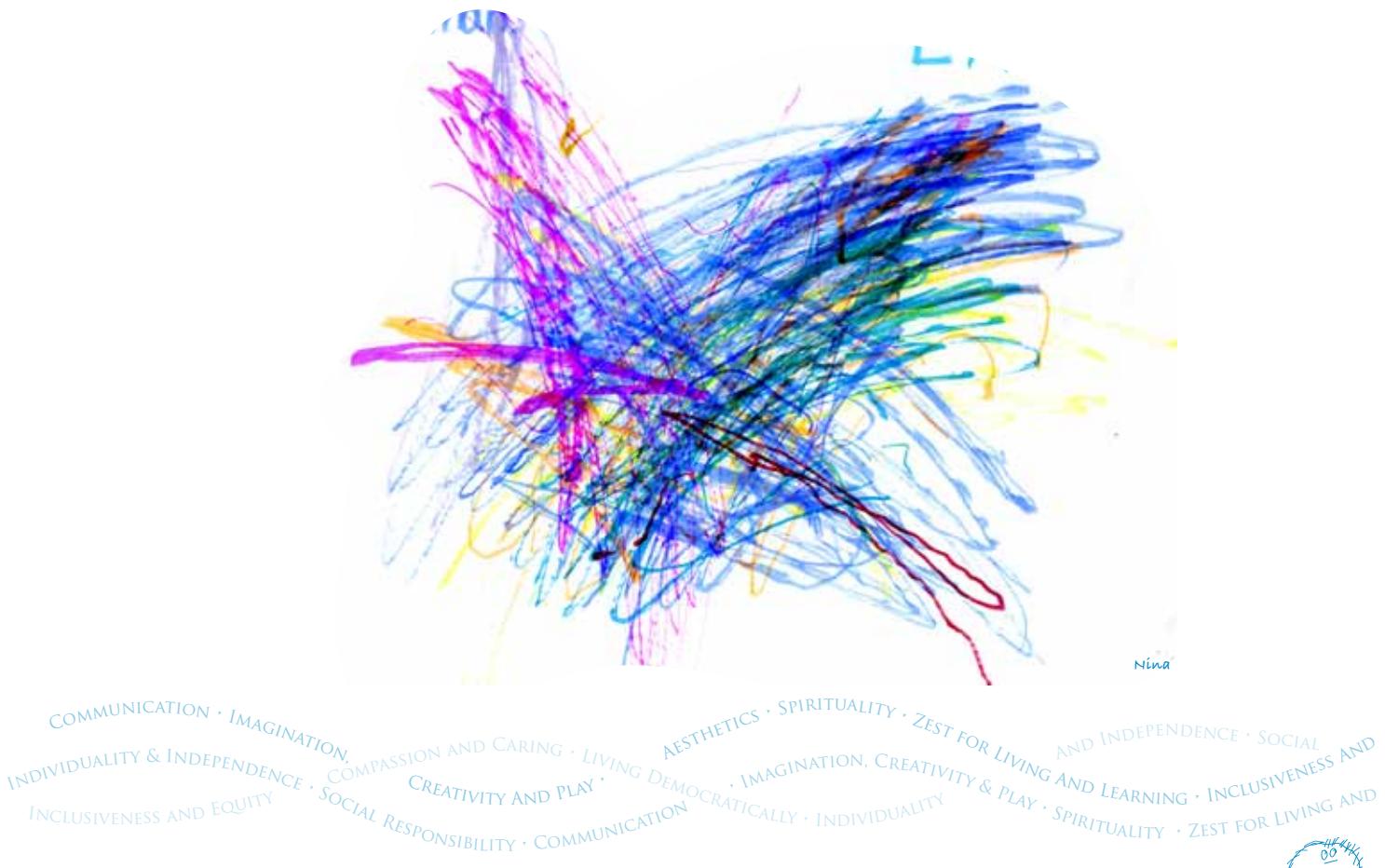
Our beliefs and values guide us. If we believe a child is capable, how then do we look at what a child is doing or saying? If we believe that growth is a process and children change, what perspective do we gain? If we believe that parents are developing their own identities as parents, how do we support their journey? If we believe in building a strong early childhood community, how do we welcome suggestions, welcome uncertainty, welcome learning, and welcome tensions?

## *For Reflection*

Think about your own family and how you were brought up. How have your beliefs, attitudes, and values about how to care for and support infants and toddlers changed or stayed the same over the years? What brought about the changes or reinforced what you already believed?

Think about other cultures than your own. Recognize that there are differences and similarities among all cultures. When you feel yourself judging a practice that a colleague or a family prefers, or a family's request for how they want their child cared for, stop and ask yourself: Could this be a cultural bias of mine? Do I really understand what this family is asking and why? Explore your feelings and potential biases about others' practices in regard to child rearing and your own beliefs about how infants and toddlers should be cared for.

Janice Im, Rebecca Parlakian, and Sylvia Sánchez (2007, 66)





*to come...*

placeholder text

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## PICTURE BOOKS TO READ WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Ahlberg, Janet and Allan Ahlberg. *Peepo!*

Aliki. *Hush Little Baby: A Folk Lullaby.*

Anno, Misumasa. *Anno's Counting Book.*

Bang, Molly. *Ten, Nine, Eight.*

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Toes, Ears & Nose!*

Blackstone, Stella. *Bear in a Square.*

Bodsworth, Nan. *A Nice Walk in the Jungle.*

Bowie, C.W. *Busy Toes.*

Brown, Margaret Wise. *The Noisy Book.*

Bruna, Dick. *I Can Count.*

Bunting, Eve. *Flower Garden.*

Burke, Tina. *Sophie's Big Bed.*

Burningham, John. *Mr. Gumpy's Outing.*

Butler, John. *Hush, Little Ones.*

Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

Cauley, Lorinda Bryan. *Clap Your Hands.*

Chorao, K. *The Baby's Lap Book.*

Ehlert, Lois. *Color Farm.*

Emerson, Sally. *The Nursery Treasury: A Collection of Baby Games, Rhymes and Lullabies.*

Falconer, Ian. *Olivia's Opposites.*

Falwell, Cathryn. *Feast for 10.*

Fox, Mem. *Hattie and the Fox.*

Gag, Wanda. *The ABC Bunny.*

Hague, Michael. *Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear: A Classic Action Rhyme.*

Hill, Eric. *Where is Spot.*

Hoban, Tana. *Black on White.*

Holub, Joan. *My First Book of Sign Language.*

Hutchins, Pat. *Rosie's Walk.*

Loosse, Barbara. *Mama, Do You Love Me?*

Katz, Karen. *Counting Kisses.*

Kunhardt, Dorothy. *Pat the Bunny.*

Lear, Edward. *The Owl and the Pussycat.*

Lewis, Kevin. *Chugga Chugga Choo Choo.*

Lionni, Leo. *Let's Play.*

Martin, Bill Jr. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*

McCloskey, Robert. *Make Way for Ducklings.*

Miller, Virginia. *On Your Potty!*

Opie, Iona & Peter Opie. *The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book.*

Ormerod, Jan. *Messy Baby.*

Oxenbury, Helen. *All Fall Down.*

Parr, Todd. *The Peace Book.*

Piper, Watty. *The Little Engine that Could.*

Prater, John. *Again!*

Prince, April Jones. *What Do Wheels Do All Day?*

Rathmann, Peggy. *Good Night, Gorilla.*

Rotner, Shelley. *Lots of Feelings.*

Slobodkina, Esphyr. *Caps for Sale.*

Stiegemeyer, Julie. *Cheep! Cheep!*

Waddell, Martin. *Owl Babies.*

Wildsmith, Brian. *Brian Wildsmith's ABC.*

Williams, Vera B. *Music, Music for Everyone.*

Wood, Audrey. *The Napping House.*

Yolen, Jane. *Off We Go!*

Zelinsky, Paul. *Knick-Knack Paddywhack.*

Zolotow, Charlotte. *William's Doll.*

These picture books are available through the New Brunswick Public Library system. Search these authors at <http://vision.nlb.ca/> to find other great books.

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Consider the following questions, from Mary Renck Jalongo's *Young Children and Picture Books*, 2nd ed. (2004), as you examine the illustrations in your picture book collection:

- Are the illustrations and text synchronized?
- Does the mood expressed by the artwork (humourous or serious, rollicking or quiet) complement that of the story?
- Are the illustrative details consistent with the text?
- Could a child get a sense of the basic concepts or story sequence by looking just at the pictures?
- Are the illustrations or photographs aesthetically pleasing?
- Is the printing (clarity, form, line, colour) of good quality?
- Can children view and review the illustrations, each time getting more from them?
- Are the illustrative style and complexity suited to the age level of the intended audience?  
~ Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy, and Anne Stonehouse (2008, 63)

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