

From the day children are born, they enter a new and colourful world of discovery, where everything is new and unfamiliar. To get to know themselves, others and their worlds, they need to feel safe and confident. Creating rich, stimulating, engaging environments for them to explore will ensure that they are active participants in their own learning.

The Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum is based on the vision all children can grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth, and a zest for living and learning.  To reach this point requires a holistic approach to early learning and care, where all of the curriculum elements function in harmony with each another. The curriculum promotes healthy development by emphasizing responsive [relationships,](https://www.gnb.ca/0000/ECHDPE/learn-e.asp#relationships) stimulating [environments](https://www.gnb.ca/0000/ECHDPE/learn-e.asp#environments) and learning through [play](https://www.gnb.ca/0000/ECHDPE/learn-e.asp#play).

Based on up-to-date research on how to maximize children’s learning, the curriculum appeals to the uniqueness of each and every child.  This factor contributes to the innovative nature of the curriculum, and allows its contents to be practised across a variety of cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds.

By implementing its teachings at the earliest age possible, children are prepared for a smoother transition into primary school, and given a foundation of learning that will support them throughout their lives.

Caring and supportive relationships are fundamental when creating an environment that encourages healthy learning experiences for children. Positive relationships foster feelings of safety and trust that all children need in order to explore and experiment with confidence. Relationships occur on a variety of levels, each of which contributes to a child’s learning endeavours in a different way

* **Relationships between families and child-care educators** 
  + Trust and consistency between families and educators is important in establishing and settling into new routines.
  + Parents have personal knowledge about their children that is essential to educators when planning and documenting learning experiences.
  + Children’s learning can be extended from the home to the child-care setting.
  + Both can celebrate and acknowledge the child's individual strengths.
  + Parents can feel supported and reassured in knowing that their own cultural identity is being supported/extended in the child-care setting.
* **Relationships between children and educators** 
  + The relationship that is formed between children and educators helps instil a sense of predictability in children’s lives, and contributes to the attachment they develop to those who care for them.
  + When educators listen to children and treat them with consideration and respect, a warm and caring relationship of trust is created.
  + Flexibility in planning allows educators to address the individual interests, strengths and needs of each child, which encourages them to actively participate in their own learning.
* **Relationships between children** 
  + When placed together, children begin to develop friendships that are vital to learning and development.
  + As children begin to participate in a greater range of social activities, parents and caregivers serve as facilitators, making sure that these relationships will allow children to learn from each other.
* **Relationships between child-care educators**
  + Discussing unique approaches, long-term planning initiatives, and consultation on various situations provides parents and caregivers with a chance to gain perspectives from others in their field, leading to professional growth.
  + Including the reflective insights of all those who contribute to a child’s learning and growth is to the benefit of the children involved.

Environments consist of social (people) and physical (places and things) elements. Attention to a child’s surroundings is essential for creating an environment where learning and well-being are promoted and enhanced. An optimal environment is one that is conducive to learning and development, reflects the goals and values of those involved, and is motivating to children.

* **Environment as the third teacher – parents being the first, caregivers the second, and environment the third.**
  + With thoughtful planning, parents and caregivers can maximize the learning potential in an environment.
  + The right objects or materials, combined with a flexible and open atmosphere, will entice children to explore new methods of problem solving and provide fresh outlets for creativity.
* **A healthy learning environment includes:**
  + materials that are fun, promote learning through play, and challenge children to think creatively: sand, building blocks, art supplies, books, writing materials, scientific and mathematical materials, household items;
  + opportunities for positive and rich communication and socialization, which are key in building self-awareness and respect for others;
  + activities that provide a wide variety of experiences, such as:  indoor and outdoor activities; small- and large-group work; cultural- or seasonal-themed activities; and activities connected with the child’s community;
  + celebration and integration of individual cultures; and
  + sufficient time for playful exploration and discovery.

At play, children take learning into their own hands. Using their own ideas, they create, collaborate, and solve problems. Environments and relationships that create an atmosphere of trust, while providing positive and engaging experiences, are necessary for healthy, developmental play.

Play is considered a primary element throughout the Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum. Play cultivates growth in a number of ways, each of which contributes to increasing children’s self-awareness and confidence, enhancing their quality of life and building their understanding of the world around the

* **Imagination and creativity**
  + In the right environment, children will engage in play that allows them to explore. They will use their imaginations to invent new situations and assume roles in the play world, pushing boundaries and making discoveries that develop new interpretations that may be related to the real world.
  + As children develop the capacity for creative thinking, their interactions with others will become more complex, and their ability and ease of communication will increase.
  + Witnessing and accepting the creativity of others helps children to develop respect, an appreciation for diversity and a sense of democracy.
* **Playful exploration and problem solving**
  + At play, children examine the properties of objects. They arrange things in categories according to colour, size and shape; they experiment with cause and effect, and build their vocabularies in order to communicate about objects.
  + They test their limits. Mentally, they test their abilities to observe and distinguish. Physically, they discover their strength, speed, and control over movement.
  + Children learn to co-operate with each other within limitations. They begin to recognize rules of time, space and roles as they participate in teamwork and play fairly with others.
  + They become creative in reaching solutions when faced with a practical problem.
* **Dizzy play**
  + Children rejoice in their ability to turn around the mood of a room with their boisterous laughter, bursts of energetic activity, and silly antics. This behaviour tests their limits and establishes a level of acceptability in their actions.
  + Parents and caregivers recognize and embrace these performances with a level of patience, and strive to maintain safety while adhering to the resilient nature and desires of children.
* **Community**

An increased sense of community may be reached through shared laughter and enjoyment through play, which nurtures bonding and trust, as well as a sense of cultural identity.