



3.1.4

Diversity and Social Responsibility



Children experience socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others, inclusive, equitable, democratic, and sustainable practices are enacted, and social responsibility is nurtured.

- Inlusiveness and Equity
- Democratic Practices
- Sustainable Futures





3.1.4 Diversity and Social Responsibility

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

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

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

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

This goal has three facets:

- **Inclusiveness and Equity**
- **Democratic Practices**
- **Sustainable Futures**



Inclusiveness and Equity

All children, regardless of race, religion, age, linguistic heritage, social and economic status, gender, or ability are entitled to inclusion in everyday activities and routines. When inclusiveness and equity are practised, children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, linguistic and cultural identities. They become sensitive to the effects of poverty and begin to contribute to local and global initiatives that address it. Learning requires inclusive and equitable environments where children work and play within diverse groups, and engage in meaningful, respectful interactions with people, materials, and content that embody diversity.

Children appreciate their own distinctiveness and that of others

- Learning about their cultural heritages and those of other families within the centre and the broader society
- Becoming knowledgeable and confident in their various identities, including cultural, racial, physical, spiritual, linguistic, gender, and socioeconomic

Children engage in practices that respect diversity

- Forming positive, inclusive relationships with all children
- Learning about differences, including cultural, racial, physical, spiritual, linguistic, gender, social, and economic
- Learning about and engaging with communities representative of Alberta society
- Learning about and participating in helping projects—locally and globally

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

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

For Reflection

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

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

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



Democratic Practices

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

Children learn to be responsible and responsive members of the community

- Showing sympathy and empathy for others
- Giving help, comfort, and encouragement, and valuing others' contributions
- Respecting the materials, equipment, and spaces shared with others

Children practise democratic decision-making, making choices in matters that affect them

- Beginning to understand their rights and responsibilities, and those of others
- Voicing their preferences and opinions, and developing an awareness of other points of view
- Questioning, co-constructing, and reworking rules and procedures

Children practise fairness and social justice

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

For Reflection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Think about ways that you help children to work through problems and return them to the community as contributive members.



Sustainable Futures

Children's affinity to nature, of which they are part, provides a basis for understanding and questioning the place of humankind in nature and for developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to contribute to the development of sustainable futures.

This learning requires children's involvement with caring, compassionate, and courageous role models who actively support their first-hand engagement with the natural and constructed world and their participation in environmentally and socially responsible communities.

Children develop a sense of wonder and appreciation for the natural world

- Bringing all their senses to exploring nature
- Taking pleasure in natural beauty
- Connecting to and respecting the natural world

Children learn to recognize and record patterns and relationships in nature

- Noticing regularity, repetition, and changes in nature
- Learning to systematically observe, name, and record natural phenomena
- Raising questions about changes, connections, and causes, and undertaking first-hand investigations

Children develop a sense of appreciation for human creativity and innovation

- Bringing all their senses to exploring the constructed world
- Learning to appreciate beauty, creativity and innovation in art, architecture, and technologies
- Exploring the mechanical advantage of tools and machinery
- Designing and evaluating technological solutions

Children learn about natural resource development and manufacturing

- Making connections between raw materials and finished products
- Developing an appreciation for the work of others
- Learning that different approaches to resource development and production have different impacts

Children learn environmentally and socially responsible practices

- Reducing consumption
- Reusing and recycling
- Participating in care of plants and domestic animals, and stewardship of local plant, insect, and animal life
- Participating in local restoration and regeneration projects



For Reflection

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

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

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

How do you provide children with opportunities for first-hand learning about natural resource development and manufacturing? Think about crafts, farming, fishing, forestry, mining, tourism, and manufacturing operations that you might visit in your locality, and/or workers who might visit your centre. Consider how the involvement of parents can work to enhance children's learning about local resource development and manufacture.

