



## Section 1

# *Flight:* An Introduction



## Section 1

# Flight: An Introduction

*Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* inspires curriculum **meaning making** that highlights the **relationships** and curriculum decisions shaping responsive practices in early learning and child care communities. It is a guide for early childhood educators to use in their everyday work with young child care frameworks that have been developed in other parts of Canada and around the world, in particular the *New Brunswick Framework for Early Learning and Child Care—English*.<sup>1</sup>

The Alberta framework recognizes, appreciates, and values:

- the practice of relationships among educators, children and families that make visible the uniqueness of each child care centre and family day home in Alberta.
- the **co-constructed** nature of early learning curriculum: recognizing the unique nature of learning in early childhood, educators make curriculum decisions “in the moment,” extending play and learning through thoughtful reflection and dialogue with children, families, and other educators.
- the search for a shared professional language—a language that may cause pause, calling upon us to reflect deeply in order to make the values, principles, and goals that frame practice in early learning and child care clear to ourselves and visible to others.

**An early learning and child care curriculum framework is different than a traditional curriculum.** In early childhood, curriculum is focused on broad holistic goals rather than specific outcomes for each subject area. Early learning and child care curriculum frameworks embrace children’s everyday experiences as the sources of curriculum meaning making. Early childhood educators use the goals in the curriculum framework to describe and interpret children’s everyday experiences. In early childhood, curriculum content is integrated, emerging from children’s fascination with the world. When educators notice children’s interest in exploring nature, people, places, and objects as well as print, stories, numbers, shapes, and patterns, and when they name the connections between these experiences and early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, music, and art, they are co-constructing early learning curriculum with young children and making the curriculum visible to others.



**Early childhood curriculum is embedded in children’s daily experiences with their families and in local communities.**

These experiences inform the care routines, play, learning, and developmental experiences in early learning and child care programs. They are reflected in the curriculum decisions that early childhood educators are already making. These decisions inform their interactions with each child and **family** and are revealed in the selection of play and learning materials, design of the care, play, and learning space, and organization of daily routines.

The following sample narrative is one of many moments of curriculum meaning making that can be described and interpreted in relationship to the goals, values, and principles in *Flight*.

Marco is playing with the small cars when the educator calls, “Clean-up time.” Marco continues to play with the small cars and when the educator approaches, she suggests to Marco that he hold onto one of the cars while she models putting the other cars into the box. Marco uses the one car to drive the other cars into the box. When the cars (except the one in Marco’s hand) are in the box, the educator reminds Marco that they are going to go outside next and reminds him of the big trucks in the sandbox. Noticing that Marco is still holding onto the small car, she asks, “Do you want to save that car on the shelf or in your cubby?” He smiles as he holds her hand and heads towards the coat area to put the car in his cubby.

A first reading of this simple narrative may not reveal Marco’s discomfort with daily transitions. Working in a **practice of relationships**, however, the educator recognizes that Marco is reluctant to leave the cars he is playing with inside, to join others outside. She acts with sensitivity and respect for Marco. She models tidying the cars and invites Marco to hold onto a prized object—his preferred small car. She knows that she is caring for Marco’s feelings, and by doing so, she communicates that caring is a valued disposition in this community. In this way, she participates with him in a “gentle” transition from one activity to another and highlights what will happen next (going outside to play with trucks). She assures Marco that he can save the small car in a place of his choice, allowing his anxiety to ease. This educator understands the curriculum goal, Well-Being. She knows that her interaction supports



The **Vision** of this curriculum framework highlights the potential of strong, active, and energetic early childhood communities grounded in the rights of children and reflective of Alberta's diverse families.

Marco's emotional health and positive identity. As she shows respect and responsiveness to him, he is experiencing trust and compassion with children and adults.

This is a sample of how a curriculum framework guides educators as they use curriculum goals to interpret a child's everyday child care experience. It illustrates how curriculum decisions reflect early childhood professional values (democratic citizenship and equity) and principles (children are citizens and active participants in society). The framework can help educators reflect on their practices in ways that may shift them from doing what has always been done toward intentional curriculum decision-making. The curriculum framework can help educators see, think about, and reflect on why this interaction—along with many other daily interactions—has the potential to shape and extend children's play experiences and their sense of belonging.

*Flight* is grounded in a **Vision** of strong, active and energetic early childhood communities—**places of vitality**—where the rights of children as citizens are recognized and where the diversity of Alberta families is reflected and can be expressed. A preliminary set of shared professional **Values**—values for early childhood communities, values for early learning processes, and values for meaningful relationships with families—emerged from the provincial consultation process. The framework's **Guiding Principles** emphasize the significance of children's family and early experiences for their learning and **citizenship** in early childhood communities today and in the future.

In Section 2, the main ideas in the framework are organized around five interrelated, core concepts:

- **The Image of the Child: A Mighty Learner and Citizen** introduces the theoretical foundation of the framework, and reflects critically on the multiple **images of the child** that are embedded in the multiple perspectives of learning that inform our work.
- **A Practice of Relationships: Your Role as an Early Learning and Child Care Educator** describes the complex and multifaceted relationships that frame the dynamic work of educators, who co-construct curriculum meaning making as **co-learners, co-researchers, and co-imaginors of possibilities** alongside and in relationship with children, families, other educators, and professionals.



- **Mighty Learners: Nurturing Children’s Dispositions to Learn** explores the rich potential that each child already brings to every learning situation—their **dispositions to learn**—and the educator’s role in strengthening these dispositions as part of a strong foundation for learning in early childhood. The **co-inquiry** planning process and the documentation of children’s experiences through **learning stories** is introduced.
- **Responsive Environments: Time, Space, Materials and Participation** considers how the major framework concepts—the image of the child as a mighty learner and citizen, the practice of relationships and the dispositions to learn—are reflected in, and revealed through the everyday experiences, interactions and routines in an early childhood program.
- **Transitions and Continuities: Supporting Children and Families through Change** reflects on the critical role of educators and early childhood programs in enhancing the continuity of the child and families’ experience during the many transitions that occur in the early childhood years—the daily transitions with/in programs, as well as transitions between programs and into formal school settings.



The Section 3 the framework goals and dispositions to learn are described in detail, focusing on their use in practice.

**Holistic Play-Based Goals for Children’s Responsive Care, Play, Learning, and Development**—*well-being, play and playfulness, communication and literacies, and diversity and social responsibility*—are reprinted from the *New Brunswick Framework for Early Learning and Child Care—English*. **Children’s Dispositions to Learn**—*playing and playfulness, seeking, participating, persisting, and caring*—are described along with sample narratives. The goals and dispositions to learn are the basis of a common professional language of curriculum meaning making in early childhood, a language that educators use to describe what children are doing, reflect on the decisions that shape daily interactions with children and families, and co-imagine the multiple possibilities for deepening and extending children’s learning.

*Flight* is intended to stimulate curriculum meaning making through professional dialogue within and across vibrant early childhood communities. Thinking about early learning and child care programs as early childhood communities reframes our image of educators as co-learners, co-researchers, and co-imaginings of possibilities with/in relationship with children and their families. Early childhood communities focused on strengthening family and community relationships become places of vitality for children, families, and educators.

