



1.4

Values





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The following values emerged through consultation with a provincial advisory committee. Establishing a shared set of professional early childhood values that resonate in both local and global contexts was recognized as a significant base for the framework.

Values for Early Childhood Communities

- Democratic citizenship
- Equity
- Intercultural competence and communication
- Environmental sustainability

In early childhood communities, we value the opportunity to participate—actively and authentically—in the daily decisions of life and living. **Democratic citizenship** means that children and their families have opportunities to participate, to make choices, to express ideas, and to act upon their daily experiences by asking questions and expressing their opinions in matters they relate to. This involves informing children and their families and giving them options to participate in the healthy development of their early childhood community.

In early childhood communities that value equity, each member has the opportunity to participate and have one's perspectives heard and respected. **Equity** means that each member of the community receives what is needed to participate and contribute. For example, making accommodations for meeting times or language interpreters for families; providing additional supports to ensure that every child is able to explore and share ideas with others, such as such adding braille preschool picture books to your library. Everyone contributes to healthy early childhood communities in the ways that they care for and about one another. Young children can gain awareness, appreciation, and respect for one another when they play and learn in communities that explore questions such as, What is fair? What is equal? What is equitable? How am I valued? How do I value others?



Early childhood communities are **tapestries of dynamic differences**. In honouring our differences, we create opportunities to know others and ourselves in new and deeper ways. In early childhood communities, intercultural competence and communication is revealed in the ways that we act and also in ways that we relate to/with one another. Understanding, appreciating, and respecting our commonalities and our differences strengthens our local communities and cultivates a rich experience of sharing and learning about many ways of being and knowing the world. In early childhood communities, **intercultural competence and communication** requires acknowledgement that there are many ways of doing, being, living, and learning, and that these differences connect to how people experience and view the world—their social and cultural experiences.

Deeply connecting with/in our physical world begins with being **responsibly playful** in nature. In early childhood communities, this means spending time outdoors, planting gardens, and creating imaginary worlds in nature through play. In Alberta, it may mean taking opportunities to appreciate the uniqueness of the seasons and changes in weather and daylight at different times. Valuing **environmental sustainability** means developing a stewardship of nature and living things through learning and watching and acting and caring about the world, on the ground, in the water, and through the air.





Values for Early Learning Processes

- Active engagement and participation
- Meaning making and co-constructing knowledge
- Play and playfulness
- Creativity and imagination
- Multimodal literacies
- Interconnectedness of ideas
- Reciprocity of relationships
- Diverse perspectives for learning
- Inclusiveness

Early learning and child care educators value learning as an active, social process that begins in infancy. From their earliest moments children are learners, make meaning of self, others, and the world. Knowledge in the early years is **co-constructed** through each child's engagement with people, places, objects, and ideas.

We value **play**. It is one of many **multimodal literacies** and an essential medium through which children explore and participate with others and in the world. Children's active, collaborative, complex, communicative, vivacious playfulness within commonplace and imaginary events and experiences is a **meaning making** process. In early childhood communities, this means that we provide children with many opportunities to co-construct their knowledge.

Children's **active engagement and participation** in learning is demonstrated through their theory building, **creativity**, problem solving, **playfulness**, and **imagination**. Educators who value children's active learning processes provide diverse materials and media for exploration and representation. Through these kinds of experiences children develop a strong and resilient learner identity—they become **mighty learners**, as described in [*Mighty Learners: Nurturing Children's Dispositions to Learn*](#).



Children experience **reciprocity of relationships** and **interconnectedness of ideas** in **inclusive** early childhood communities where educators value children's contributions and seek out **diverse perspectives of/for learning**. Learning becomes dynamic as educators and children come together to explore, communicate, examine, question, problem-solve, and challenge what is known and what is yet to be understood. Educators value children's ways of knowing about the world through their senses and whole body exploration. Within this dynamic care, play, and learning environment, ideas bring people together, and **active engagement and participation** is what helps those ideas deepen and grow more meaningful.



Values for Meaningful Family Relationships

- Knowledge and appreciation of family, social, and cultural practices and traditions
- Belonging to family and community
- Learning from elders and community leaders
- Respect and social responsibility within family and community

Entering early childhood communities is often the first time families look to the broader community for support and partnership for the care of their children. It is a significant step for both the child and his or her **family**. Within a **practice of relationships**, the educator demonstrates care, respect, honour, sharing, and thoughtful listening to gain **knowledge and appreciation of family, social, and cultural practices and traditions**.

Families know their children in ways that no one else can. This particular knowledge of the child has roots in family, social, and **cultural practices** and traditions.¹ Family practices and parent–child interactions influence and are influenced by stresses, demands, and joys of daily living and desires for the child. The child’s sense of **belonging to family and community** is strengthened through respectful and reciprocal relationships, where educators recognize the value of family connections and contributions in understanding how each child makes meaning of the world.

Opportunities to **learn from elders and community leaders** can provide authentic and meaningful experiences that connect curriculum to living and life. Cultural artifacts, such as the daily tools for eating and sharing food, help bring authenticity to care, play, learning, and development as children make new meaning of their own family experiences and those of their friends.² These connections to family, social, and cultural practices and traditions have the potential to build appreciation



for differences and nurture **respect and social responsibility within family and community**; they can become part of our daily conversations and experiences rather than disconnected celebrations of cultural-specific food, art, music, and dance. In this way we understand culture as who we are, as well as who others are, in early childhood communities.

