



3.1.1

Well-Being

Children experience safe and caring environments where their emotional and physical health, positive identities, and sense of belonging are nurtured and protected.

- Emotional Health and Positive Identities
- Belonging
- Physical Health





3.1.1 Well-Being

Well-being is important to all human beings. For young children and their families, a positive sense of well-being is nurtured through participation in an environment that is consistent and where respectful, responsive relationships and community connections are valued.

Children actively **co-construct** their identities in relation to the people, places, and things within the various communities to which they belong. Communities that support persistence, perseverance, and pleasure promote a zest for living and learning.

Children have the right to feel safe. When provided with the space and freedom to take healthy risks, their willingness to do so reflects a sense of security, self-confidence, courage, and body strength. Over time, participation in healthy risk taking builds the skills, knowledge, and resolve that will sustain them as they face new pleasures and challenges.

This goal has three facets:

- **Emotional Health and Positive Identities**
- **Belonging**
- **Physical Health**



Emotional Health and Positive Identities

Children's identities are shaped throughout their lifelong negotiations within personal, social, and cultural landscapes. Learning requires that adults treat children with respect, show compassion, and honour established relationships while encouraging new ones.

Children develop a sense of self

- Developing recognition of self
- Co-constructing their identities
- Experiencing growing self-confidence, self-respect, and ability to take initiative
- Growing in their capacity to express feelings, concerns, and needs
- Pursuing interests, passions, and strengths
- Being curious and questioning
- Persevering and persisting

Children develop a sense of other

- Supporting, encouraging, and listening to others
- Caring for others
- Experiencing trust and compassion with children and adults
- Learning constructive ways to negotiate a range of relationships

For Reflection

How does your conception of childhood and what it means to be a child influence your responses to the different identities children take on? Describe how your responses to a child's gestures, facial expressions, play patterns, verbal expressions, and work helped to increase a child's belief in herself or himself.

How do people and policies at your centre honour children's initiatives through thoughtful planning, documentation, and/or responses? Think about how your centre builds upon children's interests.

How do you provide access to materials for children? Think about shelving, displays, containers, and open-ended materials. How often are materials changed or added to? Which materials are not used, and why? Who uses the materials, and what are the patterns of usage?

In what ways does your centre build upon dispositions of optimism, joy, and a zest for living and learning? Think about positive self-talk, problem solving, curiosity, humour, contribution, accomplishment, and care.



Belonging

Children and their families have the right to experience social recognition and acceptance, and to see themselves reflected in their learning communities. Learning requires secure and consistent relationships, the affirmation of social and cultural practices, and opportunities to form connections with new people and places.

Children develop a sense of place

- Negotiating new spaces
- Identifying, creating and using personal landmarks
- Becoming familiar with the sights, sounds, rhythms, and routines of new situations
- Generating a shared repertoire of narratives and memories
- Making connections between the centre, home, and broader communities

Children build respectful and responsive relationships

- Developing cherished as well as casual friendships
- Forming close relationships with a range of adults
- Growing in their awareness that their actions contribute to the well-being of others
- Participating in group initiatives

For Reflection

How do you support children in new situations? Think about children's moments of anxiety and their responses to new situations. How do you plan for welcoming new children? How do you plan for room changes, field trips, or walks?

In what ways are family contributions invited and honoured within the centre? Think about contributions of materials, interests, time, and cultural knowledge.

How does your centre build relationships of trust between people? Think about adult/adult, adult/child and child/child relationships. How does the centre's space reflect the lives of the children, their families, and the educators?

How do you encourage the participation of every child? Think about children's friendships, patterns of exclusion, activity choices, gender, race, and class. How are children's contributions to your site invited and accepted? Think about toys, stories, cultural artifacts, ideas, questions, and children's theory building.



Physical Health

Children experience a safe and nurturing environment where healthy eating, daily physical activity, and safety—indoors and out—are practised. Learning requires that children have time, space, and encouragement to practise personal care skills; to enjoy familiar and unfamiliar foods; to develop food tastes and prepare food; to move, play, and challenge their physical capacities.

Children take responsibility for personal care

- Growing independence in self-care routines
- Learning about individual differences in self-care practices
- Helping others with personal care

Children learn about food and nutrition

- Understanding the relationship between food and their bodies
- Building confidence to try new foods
- Exploring a range of cultural practices of eating and sharing food
- Making decisions about food consumption, preparation, serving, and clean-up routines

Children explore body and movement

- Participating in a variety of physical activities, indoors and out
- Learning about their bodies in space
- Increasing bodily awareness, control, strength, agility, and large motor coordination
- Increasing fine motor capacities
- Knowing and stretching physical limits
- Releasing and restoring energy in outdoor places

For Reflection

How do people and policies at your centre work within food safety standards to include practices around food from a variety of homes? Think about Canada's Food Guide in various languages or other models such as a vegetarian food guide.

What experiences are provided at your site to promote children's active engagement both indoors and out? How do you plan for age and physical capacities? Think about access to play in the outdoors, what materials are rotated through outdoor areas, and what activities are available in the outdoors.

Discuss the implications of using food for curricular activities—for example pasta or rice for collage materials. What messages might this convey about food? What non-food materials might be substituted?

How do you address children's comments and questions about individual or family differences in self-care routines? Think about learning about families' practices, having open discussions, and taking what children say seriously.

How do you infuse daily chores and errands with vigorous physical activity?

