

# What to look for in a child-centered program:

## A helpful tool for CNC Administrators

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A child-centred program places the child at the centre of the learning process. The child is an active participant in their own learning. The program is play-based, the child has choices of learning activities, the families are seen as knowledgeable and important, and CNC staff act as facilitators of learning.

### THINGS TO OBSERVE:

#### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT: Physical space, arrangement, materials, décor**

- play and learning materials are accessible and available to children
- materials are well organized, labeled and easy to find and put away
- children's artwork, creations, projects are on display and within the children's view
- each child has their own space in the playroom (ex. cubbie) to build a sense of belonging
- each child sees evidence of themselves and their family in the environment (representations, real images, photos, storybooks, artwork, and pretend play props that are similar to things from home)
- the room is arranged with play-based learning centres that are clearly distinguished and labelled
- there is a place for families to sit and interact with their children and CNC staff
- the room is arranged with clear boundaries, traffic patterns and self-contained learning experiences
- children can see CNC staff and use them as a resource if needed
- the room has areas for active play, for focused play and for quiet activities

#### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN INTERACTIONS: Roles, responsibilities, relationships/dynamics**

##### **Children have opportunity to:**

- use their bodies and their senses, explore, have fun
- play at various learning centres
- work independently and alongside others in developmentally appropriate ways
- problem solve independently
- create, imagine, be messy, go outside, build, pretend, and represent their thinking in multiple forms
- see themselves represented in play materials, books and images in the room
- express their emotions and share their thinking

##### **Families:**

- are welcome in the program – they are greeted, there are places for them to sit
- have conversations with CNC staff who know and use their names
- are greeted in their home language and/or with a familiar greeting
- see the things their children make, create and play with

**CNC Staff:**

- know children's names and call them by their names during interactions
- interact with children through conversation, shared exploration, genuine praise, songs and stories
- get down to the children's level
- respond to children's questions and needs - even when they don't have a shared language
- are responsive in the moment and follow children's lead to create spontaneous curriculum
- assess, anticipate and extend children's learning
- engage in play and ask open ended questions
- provide a balance between child led, child initiated and caregiver supported learning
- help children to establish and maintain limits during play

**TOPICS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SDR:** Part of the discussion is based on looking at lesson plans and talking about them together to determine if these goals are being met

**Conversations about CURRICULUM: Planned and spontaneous play-based learning experiences**

- Are the activities planned based on observations of children, their interests and emerging skills, strengths and needs, understanding and capacity?
- How do you ensure the focus is on children learning through play?
- Are things planned for the group and for individual children?
- Do you take into account children's need to pursue their own interests and play experiences?
- In what way are the linguistic, cultural and social contexts of children and their families valued?
- How do CNC Staff assess, anticipate and extend children's learning?
- Do you provide opportunity for learning and development in all developmental domains (social/emotional, cognitive, speech/language, fine motor, gross motor) ?
- In what ways do children see themselves and their family represented in the space and play materials?
- Do materials include loose parts & open-ended materials ? What are some of these?
- Where and how does your program includes literacy and numeracy?
- How are you providing ongoing opportunities for children to represent and share what they are learning ?
- Are the play experiences open-ended ?
- How are you documenting children's learning and sharing it with children and their families in ways that they can understand?

**Do children have opportunities to:**

- make choices and decisions?
- initiate and direct their own play?
- play at a level that is developmentally appropriate but also try out achievable challenges?

**Do families:**

- receive regular communication from CNC staff about what their children are learning and doing?
- have opportunities to learn more about play based learning and their child's development