

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

# **GROWING IN A COMMUNITY DROP-IN DAYCARE**

*Educational Program*

The female gender has been privileged without any discrimination, as the majority of community drop-in daycare educators are women.

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR PHOTOS**

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Les Jardins du coin Chicoutimi-Nord, Chicoutimi

Maison de la famille de la Vallée du Richelieu, Beloeil

Maison des familles de Mékinac, St-Tite

Ressources Parent-Ailes, La Tuque

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Legal Deposit - 2021

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Library and Archives Canada

ISBN: 978-2-9817168-5-9 (3rd edition, 2021)

ISBN: 978-2-9806922-8-4 (2nd edition, 2015)

ISBN: 978-2-9806922-5-3 (1st edition, 2011)



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# GROWING IN A COMMUNITY DROP-IN DAYCARE Educational Program

## PUBLISHING



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The first two editions of the educational program in 2011 and 2015 were made possible by the financial contribution of the Ministère de la Famille and of Avenir d'enfants. Financial support from the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon made this 3rd edition of the educational program possible.



# PRÉFACE



When I learned about this third edition of the *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program, I was especially attentive to the specific content with regard to the characteristics of a community drop-in daycare. While children are accommodated with the same needs as other types of regulated childcare services, this educational context still has unique characteristics. Community drop-in daycares accommodate children on a less regular and more flexible basis than other regulated childcare services. First, they are responding to a need expressed by some families in Quebec who want part-time childcare<sup>i</sup>. In addition, families who use community drop-in daycares often come from diverse backgrounds and sometimes this experience is their very first contact with the educational norms and values of Quebec society<sup>ii</sup>. Second, families who have the opportunity to use daycares benefit from specific resources and expertise and receive attentive support for their needs based on the principles of the family-centred approach<sup>iii</sup>. This presence and support provide an opportunity for these families to learn to trust people other than their relatives or communities, which helps them become accustomed to this context that can facilitate the transition to other preschool services. Lastly, organizing multi-age groups in community drop-in daycares also helps meet the needs of children from the same group of siblings who share this experience by reaping the full benefits of this grouping method, whose positive impacts are becoming increasingly recognized<sup>iv</sup>.

Therefore, this edition of the *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program provides updated knowledge to allow educators to enhance their specific skills in the context of this type of daycare and thus increase the quality of their educational services.

The update also highlights the importance of ensuring educational continuity between early childhood education services to support child development. Indeed, this program builds on the principles and theories of child education and development included in the most recent educational program of Quebec's regulated childcare services, *Accueillir la Petite enfance*<sup>v</sup>. This pedagogical coherence ensures essential educational continuity, especially for children who are likely to attend several early childhood educational contexts during their preschool journey, of which community drop-in daycares are a part.

In parallel, recent studies have allowed for documenting an outline of Montreal children's preschool education path<sup>vi</sup> and its effect on their development in kindergarten based on socio-economic status (EQDEM, 2018)<sup>vii</sup>.

The main findings are that children from low-income families have higher rates of vulnerability in at least one area of development and are less likely to attend regulated childcare services. In addition, there is inequity in the number of CPE spaces in CLSC territories, at the expense of the most underprivileged sectors. This data supports the relevance of offering spaces in these daycares and is consistent with the interest of recognizing their complementarity with CPEs and other regulated childcare services. Community drop-in daycares remain a good way to increase the provision of quality educational services to children and families in these areas who do not have access to or do not want to attend CPEs.

In this context, this new edition of the *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* program remains the best way to support initial and ongoing training to enhance quality of services offered in these community drop-in daycares and to foster the educational success of the children attending them.

I therefore enthusiastically recommend reading and using this new edition, which remains an indispensable reference document for any educator working in a community drop-in daycare who is committed to ensuring the quality of services offered to children and their families.

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**Qualité des contextes éducatifs de la petite enfance**



Photo credit Jean-François Hamelin



# FOREWORD

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## COMMUNITY DROP-IN DAYCARES

Community drop-in daycares originated in community organizations over 30 years ago. The underlying reason of their development and growth is that they are the most effective means for reaching parents. Without these services, families would not be able to benefit from the support needed to improve their living conditions.

Community organizations offering this type of care provide services across various fields of intervention, including francization of newcomers, women's centres, recreational community centres, family drop-in centres, literacy groups, public education centres, etc. In addition to their specific mission and commitment to the local population, these community organizations also share the desire to reach out to families with young children. Regardless of why their services are being used, daycares accommodate families and aim to meet the needs expressed by parents.

Each community drop-in daycare is subject to the mission and fiscal imperatives of its community organization. Therefore, the terms for accommodation and registration, care schedules, number of children accommodated, and costs differ from one service to another. Some daycares are only accessible to parents using the services of the community organization, while others provide services to the whole population. Additionally, costs are based on each community organization's specific criteria, varying from free of charge to a few dollars for a care period.

Another particularity of this type of childcare is their service offer and accommodation of multi-age groups. Generally, community drop-in daycares offer half-day care periods on a temporary, partial, occasional, and emergency basis. However, several provide full-day services. One daycare space can be used by three or four different children. Over the course of a week, a single daycare can thus accommodate between 5 and 25 different families depending on the spaces available. Groups are comprised of children aged 0 to 5 and their composition varies based on the children's participation.

The success of community drop-in daycares is well established: 24 835 children attended a daycare in the 2017-2018<sup>1</sup> fiscal year.<sup>1</sup> Community drop-in daycares offer flexible, welcoming, and stimulating childcare services. They thus contribute to meeting many parents' needs. They are now positioned as indispensable services in terms of supporting families.

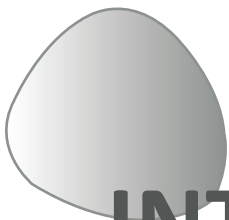
**The Association des haltes-garderies communautaires du Québec (AHGCQ) is the only national family organization devoted to promoting and advocating for community drop-in daycares and, as a result, the parents and children using their services. In 2021, it consisted of 245 members distributed across 17 regions of Quebec.**

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# INTRODUCTION

The *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program recognizes the child as being unique with an active role in their own development. To design the educational program, the AHGCQ applied the principles, values, and theoretical foundations of educational approaches and data arising from research on early childhood.

**The objective of the educational program is to foster quality education in Quebec's community drop-in daycares.**

**Educational mission:  
Mandate of the community drop-in daycare in relation to the well-being, health, safety, and support of children's overall development.**

A quality community drop-in daycare meets needs of children in terms of well-being, health, and safety while applying their own educational mission. The educator is at the core of this educational mission. It is primarily thanks to them that a specific daycare becomes renowned specifically for its quality hygiene and health care, application of safety measures, and through the well-being developed in children.<sup>2</sup> The educator identifies their needs and meets them while taking into account the educational intervention process. They form a team with parents in developing the full potential of each child. Active learning is at the core of all of the educator's actions, with the aim of supporting the child's development.

The criteria for evaluating the educational quality of the daycare can vary according to their respective educational mission. The Ministère de la Famille recognizes the following 4 dimensions:<sup>3</sup>

- Interaction between educators and children: Emotional support, community life organization, and learning support;
- Children's experiences: A schedule adapted to young children's pace, learning opportunities, routines, and transitions, free and active play, and open facilitated indoor and outdoor activities;
- Layout and materials: A comfortable and warm living space; clean, safe, varied, versatile, and accessible facilities and materials;
- Interaction between educators and parents: Mutual trust, openness, and respect of the family situation as well as use of a variety of communication methods adapted to the varying needs of parents.

*What approaches should be promoted in early childhood?  
How does the educator adjust to each child's uniqueness?  
What role do they play in the child's overall development?  
How does the manager support the educator in their educational role?  
Where do parents fit within the community drop-in daycare?*

The *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program aims to answer these questions, spur discussion among educators and managers, and improve educational practices to ensure a quality living environment for children aged 0-5 attending Quebec's community drop-in daycares.

# Chapter 1

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The educational program draws from several of the theoretical foundations recommended for accommodating the needs of children aged 0-5 and their families, including the following:

- Attachment theory;
- Humanist approach;
- Ecological approach;
- Family-centred approach.

### 1.1 Attachment theory

In the late 50s, Harry F. Harlow and John Bowlby published articles that would set the foundations of the attachment theory. This theory defines attachment as a sustained and reciprocal relationship that develops through the frequency and regularity of a warm reception to the child's needs. The child seeks closeness with the significant adult for comfort and to feel safe. They become attached with adults who hold a special meaning in their lives.

The first attachment figure is the parent. A secure attachment bond with parents fosters bonds with other adults, and makes it easier for the child to be away from their parents as this trust relationship develops their self-confidence. As the child grows older, they can hold a mental picture of their parents and understand that even though they cannot see them anymore, they continue to exist (object permanence) and they will come back for them.<sup>4</sup>

The need for closeness is the foundation for the attachment bond that the child will develop. The child uses a range of behaviours to seek closeness with an adult. The quality of the care and the way their needs are met will the type of attachment bond the child will develop.<sup>5</sup> It will grow as they feel good and safe with the educator. Children who trust their educator to meet their needs for closeness are more inclined to explore, discover, and learn.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2 Humanist approach

The humanist approach originated in the United States in the 1940s. Psychologists Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, John Dewey, and André Paré (Quebec psychologist with a Ph.D. in Education), are among the most renowned advocates of this approach.<sup>7</sup>

This approach considers the child as a full-fledged individual, born with a natural curiosity and desire to learn. This perspective helps the educator providing support to have confidence in their ability to develop the child's full potential.<sup>8</sup>

The humanist approach involves:<sup>9</sup>

- Having a positive outlook for the child;
- Separating the child from their actions;
- Providing the child with experiences and choices that allow them to understand that they are the source of their own success;
- Facilitating learning so that they can succeed.

### 1.3 Ecological approach

In this approach, mainly inspired by the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, the child grows and develops as a result of the influences of and interactions with their biological, immediate, socio-economic, and sociocultural environment.<sup>10</sup> The educator must take these into account in all educational aspects of the community drop-in daycare, including layout, support of child play by emphasizing symbolic play and through the overall quality of interactions. The educator plans their interventions, including activities and games, based on the child's needs and respects their developmental pace.<sup>11</sup>

This approach allows for systematically placing the child as the focal point and aims to improve their well-being and quality of life.<sup>12</sup> This approach involves several systems that influence each other:

- Child: Biological background, temperament, and personality;
- Living environment: Family structure, size, and dynamics; rules of living and conflict management methods; parental skills, and extended family;
- Community: Neighbourhood, community drop-in daycare and community organization attended, and friends of the family;
- Government measures and decisions: Public policies and government actions;
- Society: Beliefs, ideologies, standards, social values related to the family and expectations in terms of adult-child relationships



## 1.4 Family-centred approach

This approach was developed in the context of services offered to children living with a health problem or disability. Authors Dunst and Trivette (2007) were instrumental figures who placed great emphasis on autonomy and the empowerment of parents. They were adamant that the parents must become capable of managing their children's learning and development.

The family-centred approach recognizes that each family is unique, that the family is a constant element in the child's life, and that the parents are experts in terms of identifying their child's abilities and needs. One of the goals of this approach is to establish a partnership with the family to devise effective interventions for the child, while taking family dynamics into account. Through this approach, the strengths, skills, and needs of all family members are also taken into account.<sup>13</sup> The family-centred approach is based on 8 axioms and 5 principles.

The **8** axioms of the family-centred approach:

1. Every person is fundamentally good;
2. Every person has strengths;
3. Every person has abilities and knowledge that are different, but equally important;
4. Every person needs support and encouragement;
5. All families have expectations, hopes, and dreams for their children;
6. Every person has resources, but they do not have the same access to resources;
7. The assistance offered to families must be provided in a way that maintains their dignity and hopes;
8. Families must be equal partners in the support relationship.<sup>14</sup>

The **5** principles of the family-centred approach:<sup>15</sup>

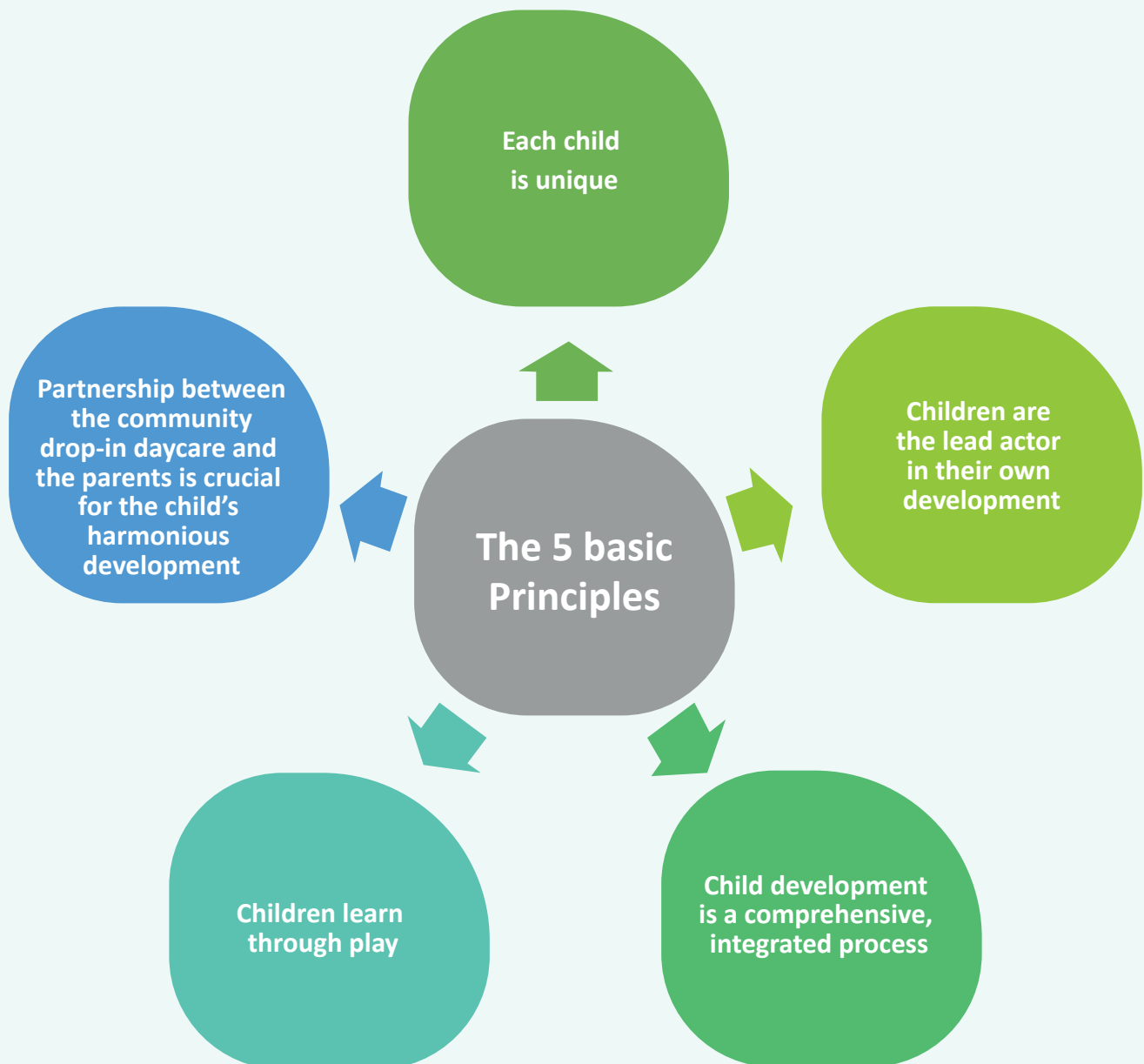
- Recognizing and respecting the knowledge and expertise of others: The parent and educator both acknowledge each other's skills. The parent, who holds the main responsibility for the child, knows essential information on the life story, habits, and temperament of their child, and on the family's culture and values. The educator has professional knowledge and knows the child in the context of daycare, which allows the parents to discover new aspects of their child;
- Promoting bidirectional communication: Through bidirectional communication, the educator listens to the parents and asks questions to learn more about the child. The educator contributes to this communication by sharing their observations with the parents. Several communication tools can contribute to these interactions;
- Shared power and decision-making: Parents are invited to jointly participate in seeking solutions and analyzing specific situations concerning their child. Their participation in various community organization activities contributes to creating a welcoming, diverse living environment;
- Recognizing and respecting diversity: Educators take the time to get to know and understand each family. This openness contributes to accepting and highlighting diversity;
- Creating natural support networks: Educators and managers are encouraged to foster a support network around families. Community organization activities provide regular opportunities for families to get to know each other, establish relationships, and eventually provide mutual support.

## Chapter 2

# THE 5 BASIC PRINCIPLES

The basic principles stem from the theoretical foundations. They guide the educator in all aspects of their educational role (Chapter 3) with the children. These principles are all of equal importance.<sup>16</sup> They recognize the child as unique and born with an innate drive to develop and learn. The child is described as a learning being, an agent in their own development, and play is deemed as the most appropriate means to support development. Therefore, the more a child is exposed to diverse learning experiences, the more they will be inclined to understand and adapt to the world around them.

These 5 principles influence each aspect of daily life in a daycare, from layout, to intervention, daily schedules, activities, play periods, partnership with parents, etc., and are addressed throughout the educational program.



## 2.1 Each child is unique

Each child develops at their own pace, with their own specific skills, abilities, needs, and likes. To apply this principle in their interventions, the educator works to understand each child's reality and respects their differences, individual characteristics, and uniqueness. They encourage the child to respect their need to express themselves and to explore, understand, and discover the world in their own way.

## 2.2 Children are the lead actor in their own development

Children learn through trial and error, observation, imitation, repetition, and experimentation. They learn through their senses: Feeling, touching, seeing, hearing, tasting, and moving. This inner need to explore comes from an intrinsic motivation to develop. Children's learning comes from their need to discover and their emerging skills. The educator's role is to support them in this drive to explore and learn.

## 2.3 Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process

The child's harmonious development is comprised of four dimensions: Social and emotional, physical and motor, cognitive, and language. All of these dimensions are interrelated, even if they each develop at their own pace. These dimensions are solicited in varying degrees across the child's experiences. Development of one dimension impacts the development in others, as they mutually influence each other. The educator's role is to help the child have varied experiences according to their interests and needs.





## 2.4 Children learn through play

Play is an important source of fun and the best way for the child to explore the world. Playing allows them to understand, imagine, adapt, and master the universe around them. Play is the main tool through which the child expresses themselves, learns, and develops. The educator promotes play and fun in all activities and all their interventions.

## 2.5 Partnership between the community drop-in daycare and the parents is crucial for the child's harmonious development

A quality relationship between the daycare team (educator, manager) and the parents greatly benefits the children, as well as the parents and the team. Good collaboration with parents begins with a warm welcome where they feel comfortable expressing themselves and discussing their needs or expectations with regard to their child. It is also an opportunity to discuss interventions, educational practices, and strategies implemented at home or at the daycare. Through respectful discussions, attitudes of transparency, and openness, reciprocal trust can be established between the parent and the educator.



## Chapter 3

# THE EDUCATOR IN THE COMMUNITY DROP-IN DAYCARE

### 3.1 Profile of the educator

*The Quebec Survey on Drop-In Daycare Services Offered by Community Organizations*<sup>17</sup> paints a portrait of the educational staff (educators and education assistants) in community drop-in daycares. According to this data, two thirds (66.2%) of educational staff are hired as educators. The remaining third (33%) are education assistants.

Sometimes educators have a dual role within the community organization. Although the majority of community drop-in daycares (59%) are coordinated by the community organization manager, coordination is sometimes (about 15% of cases) handled by a manager of the community drop-in daycare who is also an educator.

More than half (52.2%) of educators or education assistants have a college or university degree from a job-related discipline. 48% of the educational staff do not have a degree from the field of child education or a related field. Working conditions (number of hours, salary, group insurance), the lack of requirements for hiring trained personnel, experience gained in these daycares, which is not accounted for on the same basis as in childcare education services, and labour shortages are all factors that contribute to reducing the percentage of trained educational staff in community drop-in daycares.

Some community drop-in daycares use volunteers to assist educational staff. The survey data indicates that the majority of daycares (77%) have received volunteer assistance.

In the educational program, the term “educator” is used to designate the person hired to care for the children attending the community drop-in daycare. Given how the distribution of responsibilities and tasks assigned to educators and education assistants is specific to each daycare, describing every role in one document would not be possible. Moreover, regardless of whether the person is an educator or education assistant, their educational role remains the same for the children.

The results of the survey also reveal that many community drop-in daycare educators and education assistants have accumulated several years of experience in this area, with 30% of them having 10 or more years of experience, and 26% having between 5 and 9 years of experience.



## 3.2 Educational role of the educator

**The educational role of the educator:  
Intervene to support the child's emotional security  
and active learning.**

The educator exercises their educational role in all aspects of daily life in the daycare. This role is based on the open pedagogy approach, where the educator is a guide and the child is the master of their own learning. The characteristics of open pedagogy are as follows:<sup>18</sup>

- All educational intentions and learning situations, taking into account the age, needs, interests and pace of development of each child, provide a certain structure, while also being adaptable and flexible;
- The objectives are the joy of learning, self-expression and self-esteem, autonomy, creativity, and socialization;
- Emphasis is placed on the child's uniqueness and respect of their pace. They are considered an active learner, able to manage their learning;
- Play periods are varied and focused on the overall development, interests, and ideas of the children;
- Schedules are flexible and allow the educator to adjust to the situations or needs of the children;
- The educator adopts a democratic intervention style.

## 3.3 Democratic intervention style

An intervention style is the means used to establish a relationship with the children and support their learning.<sup>19</sup> There are three educational intervention styles:<sup>20</sup>

- Directive style: The educator seeks control;
- Democratic style: The educator seeks collaboration;
- Permissive style: The control lies in the hands of children.

Only the democratic style allows the educator to play their educational role. It fosters autonomy, active learning, self-confidence, and the child's ability to establish harmonious relationships with their peers.<sup>21</sup> It includes two essential components: Availability and demand:<sup>22</sup>

- Availability: Listening to the children, taking into account their emotions, needs, and opinions. This means having confidence in them, their potential, and their intelligence. It also means having fun and spending quality time together, individually or in a group setting to create a bond of trust;
- Demand: This component allows for living harmoniously among a group. Living together requires establishing rules. Knowing each child is unique, the educator communicates rules to children in different ways to obtain their cooperation, whether it be verbally, with gestures, pictograms, temporal markers, etc. The educator encourages them to attempt accessible yet stimulating challenges according to their overall developmental stage to support their autonomy.

The democratic educator balances these two components. If they are only available, therefore permissive (few rules, inconsistent), the children will lack reference markers. This lack of structure causes insecurity among children, who are at risk of becoming disorganized.<sup>23</sup> Educators who lean towards the demand component have a directive style (giving instructions without explaining, little listening, fear of losing control). In this intervention style, children may live in fear of breaching instructions. They will show less initiative within this restrictive structure and develop little creativity and autonomy.<sup>24</sup> Children may also meet this type of context with resistance.

To democratically intervene with children means to:

- Collaborate with children in decision-making;
- Establish genuine relationships;
- Be kind in all circumstances;
- Highlight children's skills and strengths;
- Support children's play;
- Consider mistakes and conflicts as learning opportunities.

Collaborate with children in a caring way that respects their uniqueness.

In group interventions, the educator will seek:

- Equity: A commitment to understand the child and give them what they need to thrive;
- Equality: A commitment to offer all children the same opportunities so they can thrive.

Same as equity, equality aims to promote fairness. However, equality can only be achieved if all children have the same needs.<sup>25</sup> The democratic educator promotes equity by adjusting to the uniqueness of the child in order to appropriately meet their needs.



### Example

When preparing for nap time, the educator flashes the lights to inform the children that the bathroom routine is about to begin. While the children are playing on their mats, the educator invites them one by one to go to the bathroom. Each child called goes to the bathroom, washes their hands, and resumes play. When the educator calls Lili, she refuses to go. The educator explains that she must go to the bathroom to be ready for her nap in a few minutes. Lili does not want to. The educator asks why she is refusing, and Lili explains that she does not want to stop playing. The educator replies: "You're right, it is difficult to be interrupted when you are having fun." She suggests that Lili ask Mathias to go first, after which it will be her turn. Lili agrees, and when her turn arrives, she cooperates. The next day, the educator calls Lucas. He gets up to go to the bathroom. The educator informs Lili that Lucas is going to the bathroom, after which it will be her turn. She accepts. When her turn comes, she cooperates.

In this example, the educator takes the time to understand what the child is experiencing and then obtains their cooperation. In a democratic intervention style, the educator's equitable interventions vary according to the child and their needs. The instructions remain the same for the whole group, but the educator acknowledges that each child is unique and has habits and a pace unique to them. They adjust their way of giving instructions (demand component) according to the child's needs (availability component).



### 3.4 Professional skills of the educator

The professional skills required from a community drop-in daycare educator to play their educational role are varied and complementary. They allow the educator to adequately perform all tasks related to their position.<sup>26</sup> Each skill includes knowledge (education), know-how (practice), and interpersonal skills (attitude). The AHGCQ has developed 8 educator skills that appropriately meet the educational mission of community drop-in daycares while ensuring educational quality.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1 Establish a caring relationship with the child.

- Adopt caring behaviours.
- Create and maintain an emotional relationship with the child.

#### 2 Observe the child.

- Prepare their observation.
- Observe and record significant facts.
- Analyze collected data.
- Evaluate their observation approach.

#### 3 Intervene in an educational manner.

- Plan and organize the educational intervention.
- Intervene with the child and the group of children.
- Determine the behaviours and skills to develop in the child.
- Evaluate the quality of their interventions.

#### 4 Ensure well-being, health, and safety.

- Evaluate and meet needs related to health, safety, well-being, sleep, and food.
- Apply hygiene measures aiming to protect their physical and mental health.

#### 5 Support the child's play.

- Support the child's active learning.
- Adapt the layout of the daycare.

#### 6 Collaborate with the parents and resource persons.

- Develop a partnership with the parents.
- Collaborate with resource persons.

#### 7 Work as a team.

- Collaborate in the workplace.
- Participate in meetings and daycare activities.

#### 8 Determine the child's level of overall development.

- Define their dimensions of development and main characteristics.
- Distinguish the different stages of a child's overall development.





### 3.5 Professional attitude of the educator

Attitudes form the educator's interpersonal skills. The following 12 professional attitudes are essential for exercising their educational role:<sup>28</sup>

- Ability to adapt: Being open-minded and flexible in order to deal with and adapt to changes;
- Analytical capacity: Question themselves, reflect on their educational practices, and perform complex and diverse tasks requiring good analytical skills;
- Creativity: Use creativity and imagination to support children's play, organize the environment, create appropriate intervention strategies, and find solutions to any problems encountered;
- Dynamism: Demonstrate vitality and be in the physical shape needed to keep up with the children's energetic pace;
- Listening: Listen to the needs, emotions, and opinions of children, parents, and co-workers to foster good communication;
- Empathy: Put themselves in the other person's shoes (child, parent, colleague) to better understand and help them deal with what they are going through;
- Commitment: Engage in their profession by getting involved, persevering, educating, and working as a team while maintaining a focus on the child's development and well-being;
- Professional ethics: Follow the rules, conventions, laws, and values of their professional environment, which imply respect of others and confidentiality;
- Emotional maturity: Remain calm and in control while being genuine to establish safe and warm relationships with children;
- Objectivity: Evaluate situations or actions without involving personal preferences;
- Respect: Take others into consideration and respect them in their uniqueness;
- Sense of humour: Express happiness and know how to laugh at themselves to create a fun atmosphere.

## Chapter 4

# THE MANAGER'S ROLE IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

### 4.1 Daycare manager and coordinator

The manager carries a number of roles and responsibilities, one of which is coordinating the daycare. As coordinator, they assist and support educators in implementing and meeting educational quality criteria. In some community organizations, this role is assumed by the daycare manager.

Daycare managers and coordinators guide and support educators in developing their professional skills and fulfilling their instructional role (Chapter 3) with the children. This contributes to meeting the program's educational objectives.

The tasks related to educational support are manifold and can be related to different needs, including the following:<sup>29</sup>

- Providing support in the application of the educational program;
- Developing and monitoring a support plan for problematic situations or children with special needs;
- Preparing and leading meetings or activities that encourage discussion;
- Researching and developing instructional and technical tools;
- Identifying needs for activities related to continuing education and training, structuring and designing them, and ensuring their accessibility to educators;
- Drafting newsletters, articles, and other communication tools;
- Creating and maintaining connections with community resources.

The manager knows that every educator is unique and pursues professional development at their own pace. This development is a global process that unfolds over time and encompasses every aspect of professional development. The purpose is to support them based on their skills, knowledge, interpersonal skills, and expertise.



The manager also makes careful choices to help educators to learn, and understands that fun is an important part of their exchanges. Managers encourage problem-solving, self-evaluation, and autonomy among educators, who are the main agents of their own professional growth. Managers understand that collaboration between all professionals is instrumental to successful child development, and thus establish links between people, events, the environment, educational objectives, as well as the daycare's mission, values, and intentions.<sup>30</sup>

Pedagogical experience, a background in early childhood intervention, and training in team support all add to the manager's confidence and performance in their educational support role.

## 4.2 Professional skills for managerial educational support

The following professional competencies are conducive to educational support and coaching. The AHGCQ recommends mastering both of these competencies to support the professional development of managers in their educational role.<sup>31</sup>

1. Support the daycare's pedagogical development.
  - 1.1 Identify pedagogical foundations.
  - 1.2 Collaborate with the board of directors (BOD) and educators to determine the daycare's educational mission.
  - 1.3 Develop partnering relationships with educators.
  - 1.4 Foster professional development among educators.
  - 1.5 Guide educators in implementing the educational mission.
  - 1.6 Collaborate with partners to draft the pedagogical platform.
  - 1.7 Evaluate the implementation of the educational mission.
2. Coordinate resources that promote educational quality.
  - 2.1 Identify resources that promote educational quality.
  - 2.2 Introduce resources that promote educational quality.
  - 2.3 Ensure sustainability of the resources in place.

## 4.3 Professional management approach

The following four behaviours stem from the manager's interpersonal skills. They foster the creation of a trust relationship with educators.<sup>32</sup>

- Ability to harmonize: Promote harmonization of the daycare's educational mission, guidelines, values, and objectives. Build an atmosphere of trust, a work setting that is fun, respectful, and inclusive;
- Mobilization: Mobilize the workforce to fulfill the educational mission;
- Adaptability: Demonstrate flexibility, openness, and consider new ideas;
- Professional ethics: Act in accordance with educational quality, as well as professional and interpersonal norms and standards.



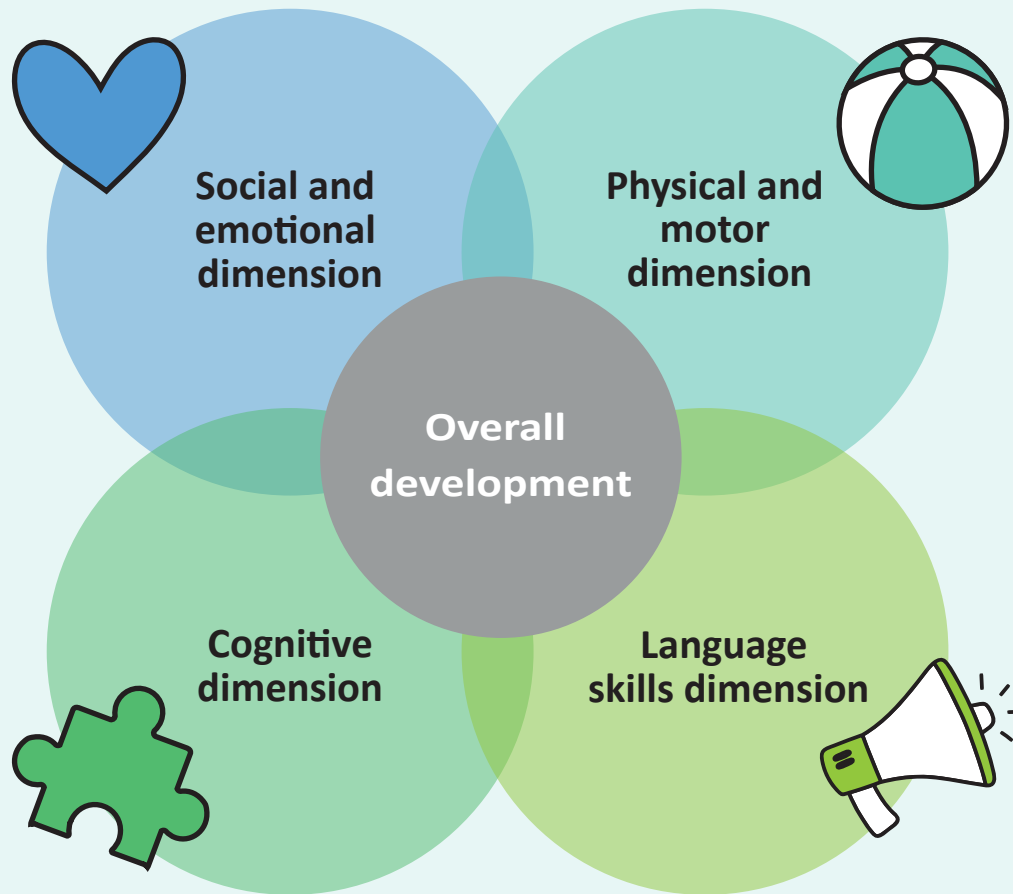


## Chapter 5

# CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“A living being is a developing being. Their needs change and evolve from day to day, sometimes even moment to moment.”<sup>33</sup>

Isabelle Filliozat, Psychotherapist, author and lecturer.



Children are born with an innate desire to develop and learn. This need is as fundamental as breathing, eating, and drinking. Through exploration, imitation, repetition, observation, interaction, and listening, children develop 4 dimensions: Social and emotional, physical and motor, cognitive, and linguistic. Each dimension has an influence and impact on the others. They should therefore be simultaneously nurtured throughout the child's life.<sup>34</sup>

Child development is influenced by both internal (heredity, body, and brain maturation) and external (environment and social interactions) factors and follows an identical sequence.<sup>35</sup> However, developmental pace varies among children. Children begin with simpler skills and, with experience, their skills become more and more sophisticated.<sup>36</sup>

Through active play, children explore, handle, experiment, discover, and make sense of the world around them. Children use play to act out situations they are familiar with, which makes learning more structured. They can watch and imitate their peers, copy gestures, make choices, solve problems, try and fail, etc. Play is the ideal medium to nurture all developmental dimensions.<sup>37</sup>



## 5.1 Social and emotional dimension



Children form their identity, temperament, and personality by interacting with their environment and surroundings. They discover who they are, what they like, and what they need. They develop self-esteem and confidence in their abilities; they enjoy being independent; they learn to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions. They develop social skills that help them interact with their environment and understand certain social rules.<sup>38</sup>

A child's social and emotional development contributes significantly to the development of other dimensions. For instance, the reassuring attachment bond that the child develops with the educator has a strong influence on neurodevelopment. This sense of security helps the child face motor challenges and improve their skills. Developing a sense of confidence encourages the child to explore the surrounding environment and enhance their cognitive skills. Connecting with others helps develop their language skills and learn how to resolve conflict.<sup>39</sup>

Children must have their individual needs met in order to thrive. Younger children rely almost entirely on the educator to address their needs. The needs of infants differ from those of older children and are expressed differently.<sup>40</sup> The educator is attentive to the needs of each child and adjusts their responses and interactions according to the situation. The child gradually learns how to meet their own needs by using support from the surrounding environment (educators, peers, or facilities).

It is important to understand the child's needs, the associated behaviours, and the role of the educator. The educator meets the child's needs in a sensitive, approachable, committed, and dedicated way to ensure the child's well-being so they can learn, explore, and flourish.<sup>41</sup> Educators support children by providing security using a caring and reassuring approach. In daycare settings, children grow and develop through the educator's eyes and words.<sup>42</sup>

A few developmental needs:<sup>43</sup>

- Health: Physical and psychological. Example: *The need to eat when hungry;*
- Education: All educational opportunities, establishing boundaries, structure, and expectations. Example: *The need to know the rules of communal life at the daycare;*
- Behavioural and emotional development: Attachment, adaptation, emotional control, and stability. Example: *The need to learn how to express emotions;*
- Identity: Personality and temperament, self-esteem, and self-awareness. Example: *The need to build confidence in one's abilities;*
- Family and social relationships: Social skills and connections. Example: *The need to interact with other children in the group;*
- Self-presentation: Self-perception, self-image, and self-awareness. Example: *The need to know the physical characteristics of their body;*
- Self-care skills: Autonomy. Example: *The need to make decisions on what games to play.*

## 5.2 Physical and motor dimension



Children use all parts of their body to interact with their human and physical environment and significantly improve their physical and motor skills.<sup>44</sup>

Children develop their psychomotor skills by exploring and touching. These are coordinated, controlled movements of the muscles which develop through experience and maturing of the nervous system (the brain). Children learn to be aware of their body and how to move in space and time. Dissociation, coordination, balance, as well as muscle tone and control will help them develop increasingly complex psychomotor skills (throwing, kicking a ball, climbing stairs, riding a bike, etc.).<sup>45</sup>

Being active develops the child's gross motor skills (walking, running, sitting, climbing, jumping, bending, etc.) and fine motor skills (grabbing an object, drawing, cutting, threading, holding a spoon, etc.), internal body map (dissociating, recognizing and naming body parts, imitating another person's movements, internalizing body image, etc.), laterality (preferred use of one hand), spatial organization (up or down, near or far, etc.), temporal organization (before or after, slow or fast, etc.), and perceptual organization (sensations, attention, discrimination, memory, etc.). Children observe, imitate, and repeat actions to perfect their movements, build confidence in their skills, meet challenges, and take risks.<sup>46</sup>

Physical development pertains to hereditary traits, life experiences, and how a child's physical and psychological needs are being met. Children need to be physically and mentally healthy to develop harmoniously. They need proper sleep and nutrition to effectively expend energy and relieve stress. They also develop their senses (touch, hearing, sight, sense of movement, taste, and smell), which allow them to investigate and gain a better understanding of their surroundings. As the nervous system develops, neuronal connections (in quality and quantity) facilitate the child's ability to learn and exercise psychomotor skills.<sup>47</sup>



Ressources Parent-Aïles

### 5.3 Cognitive dimension



Cognitive development refers to knowledge, thinking, reasoning, and intelligence. "The child develops knowledge and awareness of the world in their own way and at their own pace, so they can understand the world around them."<sup>48</sup> The child's experiences influence their brain development, redesigning and reshaping their behaviours as they learn. It is essential to properly stimulate the child's cognitive development by providing an environment full of opportunities for exploration and discovery.<sup>49</sup>

Executive functions are intricately linked to the child's overall development and learning. These higher cognitive functions enable the child to consciously control or coordinate their behaviours, actions, thoughts, and emotions. Executive functions help them guide, control, plan, regulate, organize, and manage their actions. Developing executive functions fosters school readiness and can predict a child's future academic success.<sup>50</sup> Attention and memory help children focus on the environment, people, objects, and events, and remember this information for later use at the appropriate time.<sup>51</sup>

There are various approaches and theories supporting cognitive development, with Piaget's cognitive theory favoured in the educational program. Piaget argues that a child's reasoning skills and ability to construct mental images help them with problem-solving. Cognitive development is described as a series of transformations in thinking patterns that allow children to adapt to their surroundings at their own level of maturation. Therefore, they develop at their own pace, but the sequence of stages is the same for all children.<sup>52</sup>

There are 4 stages of cognitive development<sup>53</sup>:

- Sensorimotor (0-2 years);
- Preoperational (2-6 years);
- Concrete operational (7-12 years);
- Formal operational (12 years to adulthood).

The first 2 stages take place in early childhood:

#### The sensorimotor stage (0 - 2 years)<sup>54</sup>

Children develop using their body and all of the senses by observing, touching, discovering, and exploring their environment. Children put objects in their mouths, throw them, move them, touch them, and listen to the noises they make when they fall.

A newborn's gestures are innate reflexes. They will reflexively suck on their father's finger or kick their legs vigorously and uncontrollably. As the child's brain matures and they gain experience, they begin to move with purpose. The more they explore and play, the more they will understand how their actions affect their environment. They begin to make connections between action and reaction, cause and effect. Gradually, a child moves away from action to developing a mental representation, described as "the child's ability to create a mental image of the people or objects around them."<sup>55</sup>

Object permanence is a milestone in this stage, and refers to the understanding that objects will continue to exist even if the child can no longer see them. The child learns that objects have their own existence, properties, and spatial location, even if the child can no longer see them.<sup>56</sup>



#### The preoperational stage (2 - 6 years)<sup>57</sup>

This stage is defined by the development of symbolic and imaginary functions. During the previous stage, the child developed the capacity to form mental images that generate symbolic function: Objects and play materials are transformed to suit the child's needs, imagination, and creativity. Imitation and language are crucial in acquiring symbolic functions.

The child tries to better understand the problems with which they are faced, but is limited in their understanding of the world. For example, children tend to focus on a single aspect of a situation and neglect the rest, which can lead to errors in reasoning (centring). The child is self-centred and cannot understand that the perspectives, thoughts, and emotions of others differ from their own (egocentrism). They find it difficult to understand the difference between what is alive and what is not. At this age, children attribute emotions, feelings, or intentions to inanimate objects (animism). They do not understand that two equal amounts remain the same even when they undergo an apparent transformation (non-reversibility). When trying to solve these problems, children learn concepts that are useful for entering school such as how to recognize and describe shapes, fill and empty spaces, associate and count objects, and master the concepts of time and space.

## 5.4 Language skills dimension



By developing the linguistic dimension, a child learns to interact with others, to ask questions, to express opinions or emotions, imitate characters, tell stories, explain, react, understand, etc. Language acquisition occurs naturally when children are exposed from birth to rich and varied vocabulary and through interaction with those around them. Early childhood is a crucial period for language development.<sup>58</sup>

There are two types of language: receptive and expressive. Receptive language (comprehension) refers to the ability to recognize and decipher words and their use. Expressive language (production) involves the ability to express and produce sounds, words, and sentences in a variety of contexts.<sup>59</sup> Receptive language develops before expressive language. For instance, children understand more words than they can speak. Receptive and expressive language have three components: form, content, and use.<sup>60</sup>

	Receptive language	Expressive language
Form	The ability to perceive and understand sounds, syllables, words, and sentences. <sup>61</sup>	Organizing and pronouncing sounds, syllables, words, and sentences. This is the “how,” meaning the way the child intends to say it.
Content	The ability to recognize and understand words and ideas, as well as their meaning and significance. <sup>62</sup>	The ideas and knowledge they want to communicate and the vocabulary used to do so. This is the “what,” meaning what they want to say.
Use	The context in which a speaker communicates influences the understanding of language. <sup>63</sup>	This includes the use of words, communication intentions, social aspects of language, and rules of communication. This is the “why,” or the reason for communicating.

The different facets and components of language interact throughout the child’s development. For example, if a child constructs a sentence, they must first have sufficient vocabulary to do so and understand the meaning of the words.<sup>64</sup>

Children learn to communicate before they can speak. Between the ages of 0 and 12 months, they develop the prerequisites for communication.<sup>65</sup>

- Sound recognition: The child learns to distinguish sounds, noises, and words;
- Pre-linguistic language: The child expresses themselves and communicates through crying, babbling, and laughing. They like to imitate the sounds and noises they hear;
- Eye contact: The child initially focuses on the objects and people close to them. They must be able to maintain their focus to then share their attention with the adult. Sharing attention helps the child follow the adult’s gaze. The adult can then communicate with the child and teach them words;
- Taking turns: The child learns at a very young age to take turns in speaking;
- Physical expression: The child imitates simple gestures (clapping hands or making signs for “again”);
- Communicative intention: The child begins to understand that sounds have a specific meaning, a significance. They realize that the gestures and sounds they use to communicate bear meaning to them and the other person. They begin to develop communicative intention.

Babbling is a universal stage in language development. While the sounds may appear meaningless to the educator, babbling is an opportunity for the child to practise making sounds. They begin to intentionally create words, first using a “protoword,” meaning a sound used to identify a word. For instance, a child will say “wa” for “water.” During this transitional stage, children use “holophrases,” meaning words that communicate their intention (“milk,” for “I want milk”).<sup>66</sup>

Children’s understanding and expression of vocabulary expand at about 18 months old, referred to as the language explosion. Children rapidly develop their vocabulary, enabling them to use words in the appropriate context more frequently. They gradually begin to combine words into more complex sentences and learn how to conjugate verb tenses. Before long, they master language and communication.<sup>67</sup>

Children learn to understand words by frequently repeating a word in different contexts and within a short period of time.<sup>68</sup> The educator facilitates language development by using new words, using the right words, forming complete sentences, and clearly explaining more complicated words. They encourage communication by providing children with opportunities to share and express themselves and by explaining and rephrasing what they say. Starting when children are very young, they communicate as much as possible by describing what they do, their actions, emotions, and what they see.<sup>69</sup>

The use of language is the basis for literacy development (development of reading and writing skills and associated knowledge). Language and literacy skills correlate with academic success across all subjects. Early stimulation and attending daycare support linguistic development, especially in children with disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>70</sup>



## 5.5 A continuous, comprehensive, integrated process

As child development is a continuous, comprehensive, and integrated process, it should be viewed as a whole. Each dimension has both an influence and impact over the others. The educator plays an active role by offering children varied and stimulating educational opportunities, as well as interventions for each child's developmental stage.<sup>71</sup>

### Example

The daycare educator observes the children in attendance this morning while they engage in free play. She knows what each child needs since they've been coming to the centre for several months, and she adjusts her interventions based on the situation. She has noticed that the children have made great progress in their development:

- o 2-year-old Liam has developed a relationship of trust that allows him to explore the premises on his own;
- o 4-year-old Sophie is playing with 3-year-old Mario. They are trying to build a castle with different blocks, but cannot agree on how to proceed. The educator works with them to find a solution that both children like. She verbalizes Mario's emotions, who sometimes has difficulty expressing them;
- o 9-month-old Melina is in the nursery, where she is trying to stand on a low shelf to find out what is on top of it;
- o 6-month-old Agob has been sitting at the table and is focused on a new puzzle brought by his educator. He is taking time to analyze the shapes, colours, and sizes to complete the puzzle, but he knows that his educator can help him if he needs it;
- o 3-year-old Esteban and 18-month-old Anika are cooking. Esteban describes the tasks he is performing: stirring the soup, adding salt, and putting in vegetables. Anika listens carefully and repeats the words she hears.





## Chapter 6

# ACTIVE LEARNING

*“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”<sup>72</sup>*

**Benjamin Franklin**

Active learning is a teaching approach used to apply the basic principles and theoretical foundations of the educational program. In this approach, child development is defined as a dynamic process “where the child acquires a new understanding of their world by acting directly with objects and interacting with people, ideas, and events.”<sup>73</sup>

To develop, the child acts on their own. They are born with a need to learn and discover. Their motivation is intrinsic, because it is human nature to want to understand the surrounding world. For a child, the best way to fulfil this need to learn is to provide them with a stimulating environment that offers numerous learning opportunities. In a safe environment adapted to their needs, the child discovers and explores their world. By experimenting, the child learns to better understand and interpret their world. By interacting and being in contact with others, the child learns things that contribute to their harmonious overall development.

The objective of active learning is to foster the overall development and autonomy of children by encouraging them to learn at all levels. This teaching approach is reflected in all community drop-in daycare centre activities.

## 6.1 Learning

*“The child is an active being, who develops and learns by encountering and trying to solve problems in the activities they find interesting.”<sup>74</sup>*

**John Dewey, Psychologist**

Educators who are familiar with the stages of a child’s learning process and the strategies that children use to learn can provide them with better support.

### 6.1.1 Learning process

Learning is a four-stage process:<sup>75</sup>



1. Motivation: The child has a willingness to learn and wants to learn. Motivation comes from challenging themselves, wanting to discover something, a new interest, etc.;
2. Acquisition: The child acquires knowledge or a skill by using various learning strategies;
3. Integration: Once a knowledge or skill has been acquired, using it allows the child to integrate it;
4. Transfer: The child applies the knowledge or skill they have acquired and integrated to other contexts.

### 6.1.2 Learning strategies

The following are the main strategies that children use to learn.<sup>76</sup>

- Trial and error: To learn, children must experiment and make mistakes. Making mistakes helps the child learn to correct them and better understand how to achieve the desired result;
- Observation: From infancy, children observe everything around them. They memorize images, sounds, smells, and textures. They use this information to form a picture of their world;
- Imitation and repetition: Children learn by imitating and repeating the gestures, attitudes, and behaviour they have observed;
- Experimentation: Children continually experiment in order to discover, test, and verify their knowledge and skills.

## 6.2 Active learning principles

There are nine active learning principles. To actively learn, children must:<sup>77</sup>

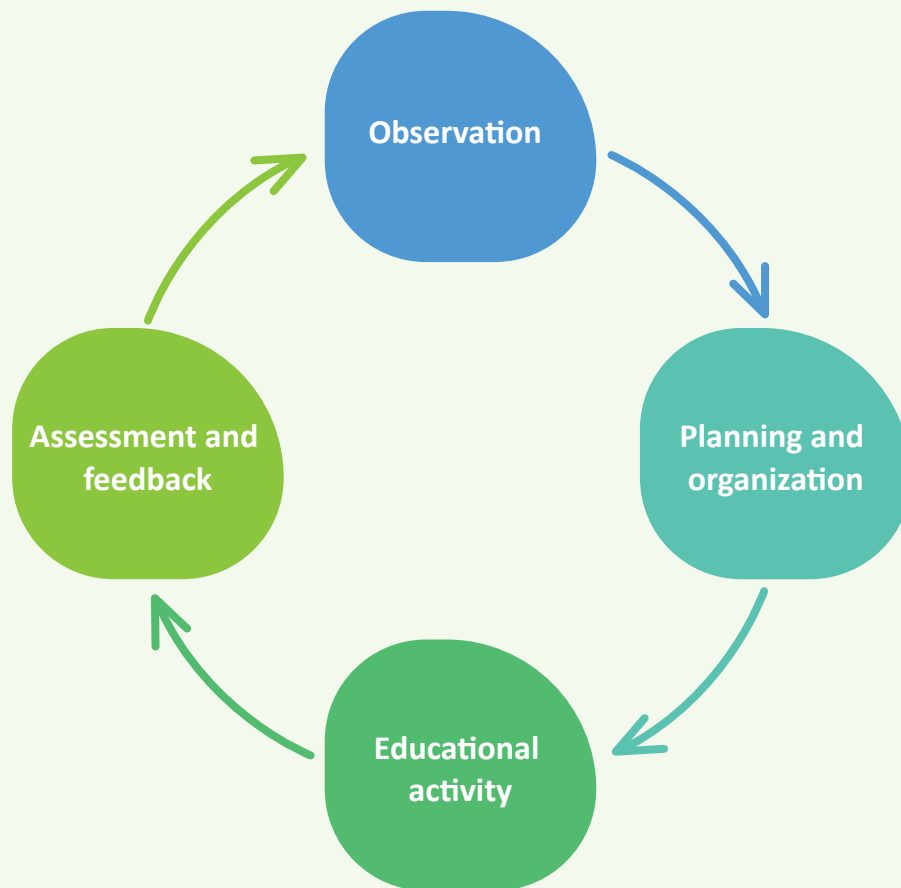
- Be active: Act on their own, take initiative, handle things, observe, do their own experimenting, compare, study, and make connections;
- Handle materials that stimulate their senses: Recyclable materials, things in nature, tools, items of everyday use, toys and gadgets of all kinds;
- Make choices: Children choose the challenges they want to pursue, things they want to discover, the materials, the amount of time they want to devote to playing, and the partners they want to play with based on their interests, skills, likes, and preferences;
- Think, share information, and discuss: Children gain a better understanding of their world by being active and interacting with others. By associating words with their actions, children assimilate and consolidate what they have learned;
- Be allowed to develop at their own pace: This applies to all dimensions of child development;
- Have enough time: To discover and explore, then continually repeat to follow through with their experimenting, analyses, and thoughts;
- Be interested in learning: Enjoyment and curiosity motivate children to learn;
- Solve problems: Experimenting comes with its share of successes and challenges. Free and active play activities are opportunities to deal with and learn to solve problems;
- Be encouraged and supported by the educator: Children need to be encouraged and supported in their exploration, thought processing, and problem solving.



## Chapter 7

# EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION PROCESS

Educational intervention is the process that defines how to act with each child. It is sequential and continuous, and is applied in all of the educator's educational activities. The objective is to plan and organize educational interventions based on observations. Educators use this process to fulfil their educational role. It is a four-stage process:<sup>78</sup>



The entire process can be done in only a few minutes when immediate action is required or can be performed over a longer period.<sup>79</sup> Educators make use of the educational interventions emerging from this process to plan learning situations and leverage learning opportunities.<sup>80</sup>

### Example

*In the school yard, the educator asks children to form pairs to play with a ball. They want to help Alex make friends at the daycare and thus ask Sandrine to play with him. The educator thinks that Alex and Sandrine could get along well. The educational aim is to help Alex develop new emotional bonds.*

## 7.1 Observation

*“While watching and looking are passive activities, observing is an active activity that requires willingness and a method, which results in learning.”<sup>81</sup>*

L’observation fournit des faits qui alimentent la réflexion de l’éducatrice et orientent ses actions éducatives auprès des enfants, en plus d’enrichir les discussions avec les parents.

### Example

*Is the child able to get dressed on their own? What are the child’s interests? Why do the children rarely use the symbolic play corner? What causes this child to throw a tantrum?*

The educator will find answers through observation. Being able to observe children is an essential skill for educators in community drop-in daycares. The educator adopts an observation method to target what they want to observe:

- Each child on an individual basis:
  - To obtain information on their interests, skills, and temperaments;
  - To identify their specific developmental, immediate, and basic needs<sup>77</sup> (to feel secure, to be comforted, to eat and drink, to be clean, etc.);
- The group as a whole: Interaction between the children, how they communicate with each other, the group dynamic, etc.;
- The layout of the daycare: Use of corners and material in the daycare and the school yard; impact of the layout on the children’s behaviour, etc.<sup>82</sup>

They must then determine the objective, method, and best times for observing the child, and where and for how long.<sup>83</sup> They select or create the tool (anecdotal record sheet, observation grid, checklist, frequency table, notebook, logbook, etc.) that they will use to note down facts and collect relevant data in line with their observational objective.<sup>84</sup> After they are done observing children, the educator analyzes the collected data and makes links to form a hypothesis regarding a need, a skill to be developed, etc. Observation is a skill that is developed through action and experience.<sup>85</sup>

### Example

*When Louis, who is three and a half years old, approaches other children to play with them, they get angry, move away from him, or protect their toys. The educator determines how to observe the child to understand what is triggering such reactions in other children. The educator observes how Louis asks other children to play with him. The objective is to understand how he engages with other children in order to help him develop skills to establish contact with others. The educator plans to use direct and clandestine observation methods to observe Louis without interacting with him. The educator will observe him during active free play periods in and outside the daycare for two half-days per week (when Louis is at the daycare) over a two-week period. The educator will fill out an anecdotal record sheet each time the situation occurs. This is the ideal observation tool for these circumstances, because it can be used to collect detailed information on a situation involving a child or a group of children.<sup>86</sup> The educator completed the analysis of the information on the anecdotal record sheets and concluded that Louis needs to learn effective strategies for asking other children to play with him.*

## 7.2 Planning and organization

In this stage, the educator plans and organizes the educational activity. Based on their hypothesis, the educator determines the educational aim. The daily schedule, routine activities and play periods, layout, materials, and type of educational intervention are tools that the educator can use to plan and organize their educational activity.

**Educational aim: The goal is to provide direction for learning situations.**

## 7.3 Educational activity

Educational activities are a combination of the educator's interventions. The educator implements the choices made during the planning and organization stage.<sup>87</sup> This stage of the process is closely linked to the educator's educational role and chosen intervention style. The educator who uses a democratic approach keeps in mind that they seek the child's collaboration in the intervention.

**Intervention means providing children with support to understand their world and how to live in society, as well as teaching them desired behaviours.**

## 7.4 Assessment and feedback

Educators review their educational practices and assess their consequences and scope. Reflection and feedback enable them to assess the relevance and quality of their interventions and ensure that they are suited to the child's needs. Educators take the necessary time to change, adapt, and improve their educational activities. Teamwork is conducive to pooling educators' reflections and searching for solutions to support children.



## 7.5 Educational intervention with special needs children

Educators working with special needs children assess their needs in order to address them. The educational intervention process is recommended to perform such analysis. Each child is unique, and children with special needs are no exception to this. Being familiar with the characteristics of a disorder or disease is not enough to know how to interact with a child. Educators learn to know a child through observation, working with the parents, and analyzing collected information in order to plan, organize, and implement activities, and then review their own practices for retroaction. The same exact process is used with all children to determine the needs and educational activities to be implemented.



Chapter 8

**MULTI-AGE  
GROUPS**

58









In community drop-in daycares, children are usually in multi-age groups rather than same-age groups. Multi-age groups provide numerous learning opportunities, while fostering an ideal environment for applying basic and active learning approach principles. Being introduced at a very young age to basic values for living in society is an integral part of a child’s development. Throughout their lives, human beings mingle, interact, and live with various people. Multi-age groups provide opportunities to develop social skills that are fundamental to living harmoniously in society, including learning about differences and tolerance, as well as developing attitudes conducive to mutual support, sharing, and cooperation.

Multi-age groups foster the integration of children from the same group of siblings by enabling them to stay together, as opposed to a homogeneous group in which they are separated from their siblings based on age. An older brother reassures his little sister and thus helps the educator understand her needs. It is rewarding for the older brother (develops his self-esteem), reassuring for the little sister (develops a relationship of trust), and provides support to the educator (collaboration with the children).

It is believed that multi-age groups are beneficial to younger children. In fact, contact with older children enhances their overall development, as the younger children’s drive to learn is spurred by the achievements of older children. However, studies on multi-age groups have shown that older children also benefit considerably from their relationships with younger children.<sup>88</sup> Older children adapt their behaviour towards children who are younger. They tend to help them, explain things, show compassion, and even speak differently to be understood. Multi-age groups provide a range of learning opportunities for the overall development of children from 0 to 5 years of age.

<p><b>Social and emotional dimension</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger children develop their self-esteem and confidence by playing with older children and imitating them. They learn how to engage and interact with other children.</li> <li>• Older children gain feelings of satisfaction and self-esteem. They feel proud of and recognized for their abilities. They are introduced to values of mutual support and sharing and learn to be patient and tolerant. They learn to be sensitive to the needs of others and develop a sense of responsibility.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical and motor dimension</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger children observe how older children move and use their motor skills. It’s a source of motivation that encourages them to move, walk, crawl, or climb, and develop their psychomotor skills.</li> <li>• Older children develop self-control to adapt the way they move and play with younger children in a safe manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognitive dimension</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger children receive a variety of stimuli from their environment, which they memorize, decipher, and assimilate.</li> <li>• Older children consolidate their own knowledge and improve their cognitive skills by serving as a model for other children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Language skills dimension</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger children familiarize themselves with words, sounds, and various noises from their environment, learn to differentiate between them, babble, imitate sounds, then words, and assemble them to make sentences. Interaction with children in another stage of language development serves as a model and encourages them to develop their language skills.</li> <li>• Older children explain, tell stories, and simplify their vocabulary to help young children understand instructions, stories, and games. They modify and adapt their tone of voice, speaking volume, and flow to make themselves understood by younger children. These exchanges stimulate all aspects of the child’s language skills.</li> </ul>



## 8.1 Multi-age group structuring

Although it is true that multi-age groups are challenging, the same can be said of each type of group.

### Examples

- *Homogeneous group:* The educator of a group of two-year-olds has been having problems because five children in her group of eight are at the stage in which they learn cleanliness. The educator feels like this is the only thing she does all day;
- *Multi-age group:* The educator of the multi-age group would like to take the children to play outside this morning, but she must watch over an infant who needs a nap.

In the preceding examples, the educators are dealing with challenges that are part of the day-to-day routine. Often, it's not the type of group that causes problems, but the way the daily schedule is organized, the layout of the community daycare, the activities, the intervention style, or the educators' expectations. Educators who use a democratic and kind approach continually adapt themselves and elements of the environment to meet the children's needs. Capacity for adaptation is one of the fundamental professional attitudes of educators. It's absolutely essential to be open and flexible in order to manage and adapt to changes.

Reserving specific corners for young and older children (corner reserved to infants and corner for older children) make it possible for each child to explore materials according to their interests and stage of development. Educators encourage interactions between children to help them better understand each other and get along. They encourage mutual support, sharing, and cooperation. They explain to the older children how to take care of the younger ones. They observe each child to ascertain their needs, interests, and strengths, and their overall development stage to adapt their educational interventions, routine activities, and play periods to the child's unique characteristics.

## 8.2 Special-needs child in a multi-age group

Multi-age groups support the inclusion of special-needs children. In a homogeneous group, the gaps between the development stages of the children may be more apparent. In a multi-age group, a special-needs child has an opportunity to be with children at the same stage of language and play skills development.

### Example

*Three-year-old Milo has a language development delay. The following scenarios show how the two types of group impact Milo's social development:*

- o Homogeneous group: The educator of the three-year-old group notices that Milo has not reached the level of play skills development as the other children and thus mostly isolates himself to play alone;*
- o Multi-age group: Milo becomes increasingly accepting of two-year-old Xavier playing near him (in parallel). They imitate each other and play with the same toys, but not with a shared purpose.*

The multi-age group allows children to develop at their own pace, in contact with others, while developing their self-esteem. The diversity of the children and the variety of toys that they can play with make it possible to meet their specific developmental needs. A special-needs child is welcomed the same way as others, with respect for their unique characteristics and their ability to learn and develop.



# Chapter 9

## PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

**“Partnership between the community drop-in daycare and the parents is crucial for the child’s harmonious development.”**

**Basic principle of the educational program**

Developing a partnership with parents is vital for the following

- The parents are the child’s first attachment figures;
- They love their child and are concerned about their well-being;
- The parents can best inform the educator of their child’s needs;
- In establishing relationships with parents, an educator facilitates better integration of the child in the community drop-in daycare;
- Better knowledge of the parents and the family’s lifestyle helps the educator support and assist with the child’s development;
- Good relationships facilitate discussion when a child experiences difficulty.

The ecological approach and family-centred approach (Chapter 1) confirm the predominant role of the family in each child’s development. Implementing conditions conducive to developing a partnership with the parents begins as soon as they register at the community drop-in daycare. Before leaving a child in an unfamiliar setting, parents need reassurance of the quality of services offered and to meet the educator who will be looking after their child. A warm welcome creates a foundation to create a relationship of trust.

In community drop-in daycares, educators meet a number of families. Each family is unique and has its own history. Becoming a parent is a responsibility that each person experiences as a function of their own family history, culture, values, and knowledge. Demonstrating respect for these differences is conducive to the development of enriching, mutual trust.

### 9.1 Welcoming families

Community drop-in daycares regularly welcome new children. This ongoing integration requires strategies for developing a relationship of trust with the child and their parents, as most children attend community drop-in daycares part-time. In this context, adjustment requires more time than for full-time attendees.

From the educator’s perspective, the moment families arrive is the moment they welcome children, and when families return, it is departure time. For the child and their parents, these times are experienced as separation and reunion.<sup>89</sup> Seeing routine moments from the perspective of the child and their parents directly impacts the way in which families are addressed and supported. As they are separating, the parents and the child experience different emotions and manifest varying needs. Listening and demonstrating empathy facilitate this new experience in the life of the child and their parents, opening the door to a relationship of trust. A sense of security develops through the educator’s constant presence and stability. Educators have patience and demonstrate kindness, while understanding that each child, as well as each parent, is unique and has their own pace, and that adjustment is a process that takes time.



### Integrating a child with special needs

When integrating a child with special needs, it is important that the community drop-in daycare be informed of their specific needs, any successful strategies, and their capabilities, interests, and strengths. Parents are a valuable source of information to enlighten and provide tools to the educator. In collaboration with the parents, the team makes the necessary adjustments to welcome the child in the best manner possible. Thus, parents facilitate a harmonious integration.

## 9.2 Communication with parents

*“Only those who know how to listen can communicate effectively.”<sup>90</sup>*

An educator who listens is sincere and respectful, and develops communication based on openness and genuineness. Answering parents’ questions and taking into account their suggestions, ideas, and expectations encourage collaboration, a partnership. The educator uses active listening techniques (feedback, reflection, etc.), demonstrating to the parents that they are being listened to and encouraging them to give the situation further thought. Active listening forms the foundation of good communication.

Parents need recognition and encouragement in their role as their child’s primary educator. A close relationship between them and the educator helps reinforce their feeling of competence, which positively impacts the child’s development. Taking an interest in the parents and wanting to know their needs and expectations strongly reflects the educator’s desire to work with them as a team. With a willingness to establish and maintain relationships of mutual trust, each partner (educator and parent) can best support and assist the child.



An educator supporting the parent has confidence in their ability to find solutions to any problems experienced. Rather than acting as an expert when a parent speaks about difficulties experienced with their child, educators favour a questioning approach that allows the parents to find the causes and solutions to the issues encountered.

#### Examples

- o *“When did your child start behaving like this?”*
- o *“Is your child angry when they are acting this way?”*
- o *“How do you react when this happens?”*
- o *“What was the result when you intervened?”*
- o *“Have you tried any other approaches?”*

The educator promotes the parent’s role by noting the children’s remarks about the times they enjoy with them and by sharing positive comments.

#### Example

*“Antoine told me you often read the frog book to him, and he really likes that. That’s an excellent way to help your child develop an interest in reading and writing.”*

Taking care of a child also means involving their parents in their development, informing them of the child’s progress, offering them information through coffee chats, discussion groups, talks, meetings, etc. This also means creating occasions for shared enjoyment, through participation in celebrations and family outings. Other options include inviting them to join committees (newsletter committee, board of directors, etc.), organize a celebration, or lead an activity (for example, arranging for a parent who is a musician to introduce the children to their instrument and conduct a musical activity with the children).

# Chapter 10

## LAYOUT

The layout of a community drop-in daycare is designed to respect three basic tenets: fostering the child's individual sense of safety, facilitating the development of their ability to be autonomous, and providing a range of stimulating experiences. A layout creating interest areas, also known as corners, is conducive to establishing these basic elements.

### What is a corner?

A corner is a section of the premises reserved for a specific practical and/or fun purpose: shared space, play area, age-related zones, meals/snacks area, care section, etc.

A layout using corners allows the children to play in an organized space where they can easily find toys. This provides an opportunity to make choices in order to manipulate, touch, explore, and transform the materials as they wish. This type of room design is also advantageous for educators, who benefit from better space organization and who can more easily determine the children's interest level in the materials. Creating corners facilitates accessibility to materials and their storage.

A daycare must have multi-purpose furnishings and a versatile layout so the materials can be changed and the room rearranged according to the children's needs and interests. Corners are designed in a location with basic elements that ensure smooth day-to-day operations, as well as the children's well-being and safety.

- A table and chairs of suitable height for children to use during snack time, mealtime, artwork, table play, etc.;
- A sink at the educator's height and another sink at the children's height, or a single sink with a footstool;
- A toilet at the children's height or with a footstool, next to the room or, at least, nearby;
- A changing table with a footstool to encourage autonomy among children who are walking and to protect the health of the educator's back;
- Solid and safe storage furnishings for each corner, making materials easily accessible to children (arranged so that heavier toys are kept lower and lighter ones higher);
- Floor mats for the motor skills development and nursery corners;
- Lightweight, solid storage bins of varying sizes;
- Specific wall areas for displaying posters, pictograms, and the children's artwork, as well as blank walls to prevent visual overload in the daycare;
- Safety caps for electrical outlets.

Corners are set up so that the educator can see all of the children at once. The educator provides constant supervision. Each corner has borders indicated by a mat, coloured adhesive tape applied to the floor, and/or storage furnishings creating partitions. These indications will help the children better understand the layout and arrangement of the premises. Educators identify corners, bins, and sources of materials with drawings, pictograms, or photos, to make them easier to find and to put away. Corners are separated by safe traffic flow corridors making it easy for the children to move from one space to another.



*Les Jardins du coin Chicoutimi-Nord*

### Permanent layout

To stimulate the child's sense of emotional security, autonomy, and adjustment to the community drop-in daycare, a permanent layout is recommended. With this type of layout, the space has corners that remain in the same locations. Specific toys and play materials are accessible at all times (blocks, dolls, books, paper and crayons, puzzles, etc.).

Children benefit from having stability in terms of the daycare environment. They consequently create reference points so they can find the materials they need on their own. They also learn to develop their creativity by using the same materials in various ways.

The disadvantage of a permanent layout is that it provides little possibility for adjusting the space to accommodate the specific needs and interests of children. This creates an obstacle to the initiatives of children who, for example, all want to play together in the symbolic play corner, need more space to move around, want to paint a large group mural, or want to build a cabin. Adjusting to the children's needs is at the very heart of the educational program as each child is unique. The ideal situation is to maintain a certain stability in the layout of the premises, while remaining flexible in terms of the children's interests, needs, and initiatives.



## 10.1 Corners in community drop-in daycare

In each corner, the toys are within the children's reach. They are sorted in an orderly manner: figurines are kept in the same bin, animals in another, etc. Each toy has its set storage area identified by a pictogram or photo. There are a lot of materials of various kinds that children can transform. The space is large enough that the children's play can be spread out. Corners in community drop-in daycares include:

- Family corner;
- Get-together corner;
- Meal and snack corner;
- Art corner;
- Table play corner;
- Manipulation and construction corner;
- Symbolic play corner;
- Reading corner;
- Motor skills corner;
- Exploration corner;
- Solo corner;
- Infants' corner;
- Older kids' corner;
- Rest and relaxation corner.

### Family corner

As seen earlier in chapters 6 and 9 on the active learning approach and partnership with parents respectively, children learn by doing, and parent involvement is a cornerstone for the educator's interventions. The family corner is an ideal tool combining these two theoretical foundations of the educational program. By designing the facility in such a way as to prioritize the autonomy of children and parents, it becomes a great source of information and learning for everyone. This spot often includes the cloakroom, and ideally, a chair so the parent can sit to ease separation and facilitate the end-of-day reunion. This corner provides numerous occasions for discussions with the parent: to explain the pedagogical approach used in the community drop-in daycare, provide information on the child's progress since their arrival, share tips for reinforcing learning at home, etc. It helps establish relationships with parents by demonstrating the daycare's interest in parental participation and involvement in the facility's activities. It is an opportunity for parents to gradually become familiar with this new living environment, meet the educators, see what happens in the daycare, and make contact with other parents.

### Get-together corner

This corner is a space where the children can gather for various purposes and activities: discussions, group activities like dancing, singing, imitation, and role-playing, music, a story, a brief show, etc. In a number of daycares, the get-together corner is often created by moving tables, chairs, and furniture, based on need. Inviting the children to each take a small cushion to sit on, or having a mattress or floor rug to enhance comfort may be worthwhile.



### Meal/snack corner

This corner is safely and comfortably laid out so each child can enjoy it. The educator can thus prepare meals without changing rooms, enabling them to look over the children at all times. The table and chairs are at the children's height and adapted to the age of these children. In this way, the chairs provide children starting to walk or crawl with the opportunity to climb up themselves. Ideally, infants should be in seats that allow them to be at the same height as the rest of the children during mealtime. They can thus participate in group life and react to this environment. The more adapted the furniture is to the children, the more opportunities there are to develop their independence, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

### Arts & crafts corner

This corner is dedicated to visual arts: painting, drawing, cutting, gluing, modelling. There is no need to conduct a person-led activity for children to develop skills and creativity through art. Each child is unique and is the lead actor in their own development; thus, they can enjoy every moment of the day exploring the various mediums made available to them. The layout for this corner requires a table, chairs, access to water, and storage furnishings containing arts and crafts materials, at an appropriate height for the children and accessible at all times.

### Table play corner

Table play includes puzzles, threading games, memory games, board games, search and find games, games of logic, and any other play that develops not only fine motor skills, but also logic, memory, observation, categorization, seriation, problem-solving, etc. The children play seated at the table but they may feel like standing up as they play, which means they are sedentary for a shorter period and also promotes muscular toning.



### Manipulation/construction corner

The main goal of the manipulation and construction corner is to encourage children to build structures, thereby discovering and delving into various spatial relations<sup>91</sup>: filling and emptying; assembling and taking apart; associating two objects; altering materials; comparing objects in terms of their size, shape, and colour; forming sequences of objects with the same characteristics (large, small, red, round, square), etc. Different types of building blocks are available: wood, plastic, cardboard, and foam. Recyclable materials (empty tissue boxes, polystyrene trays, toilet paper rolls) are also used as starting blocks to stimulate the children's creativity. In this corner, the children handle symbolic play items like cars, dinosaurs, figurines, animals, and the habitats of each (farm, play house, garage), etc. This is the ideal location to store extra large puzzles that are assembled on the floor. This play area allows children to enhance their imagination and social skills.



### Symbolic play corner

The symbolic play corner enables children to better understand their environment and the world around them. When reenacting different situations from their daily lives, they apply their knowledge, learn from others, and express their emotions. This corner can be easily adapted to accommodate children's ideas and projects. With the educator's support, it can be turned into a camping site or veterinary clinic.

### Reading corner

Access to a variety of books is essential to language development, emergent literacy, and writing; not to mention their impacts on children's imaginations. This space is a relaxation corner in which the children may rest and create relationships with others while looking at books.

### Motor skills corner

Lots of educators think that their community drop-in daycare is too small for a motor skills corner. However, this space is very important for a child's physical and motor development. This corner meets the intrinsic, constant need of children to move around. It is thus crucial to have a small space where the children can jump, run in place, roll, dance, do yoga, climb, etc. A floor mattress, cushions, and modular foam blocks allow the children to climb with no danger. This corner meets the needs of younger children to try out their motor skills, and those of older ones to expend more energy while having fun.



### Exploration corner

This corner introduces the children to multiple sensory-related experiences. A simple bin placed on a small table is all that is required for children to make various discoveries. This bin may contain, at alternate times, water, sand, cooked pasta, shredded paper, soil, dry legumes (but not for children 3 years old or younger). The educator adds containers, spoons, measuring cups, etc. Children go as they wish, wearing a play apron, as needed. These explorations introduce them to experiences that are stimulating to their senses and all dimensions of their development.

### Solo corner

The solo corner is a small space where children who are shy, crying, worried, or simply want to leave the group, have a cozy, safe place to do so. Children react differently their first few times in a daycare; lack of experience in groups and situations of conflict may cause different reactions. This corner is a way for the child, with support from the educator, to calm down and feel safe, or to simply be alone where it's calm for a few minutes.



### Infants' corner

Infants need to feel safe. A cozy corner helps create this feeling of safety among babies, which is essential to their overall development. Located as far away as possible from corridors and busy locations (doors, washrooms, lockers, etc.) and away from the older children, the infants' corner provides a view of all activities in progress. Gently and from afar, the infants adjust to their new environment. The educator comfortably watches over them to console, reassure, and support them during play. In a multi-age group, this corner is accessible to all of the children, if space allows. The presence of siblings nearby reassures the babies.

### Older kids' corner

Older children have abilities and aptitudes to be developed that require smaller-sized materials. Since the latter can be dangerous for younger children, the educator organizes a play space for children aged 3 years and older. This part of the facility, which is not accessible to younger kids, features toys and games such as smaller blocks, little cars, assembly kits with small parts, threading play with little beads, etc. Thus, the youngest children have the rest of the premises to explore, and the oldest can pursue their interests and respond to their needs in a manner that ensures everyone's safety.

### Relaxation corner

While in childcare, most children need to take time to rest to recuperate the energy needed for their development. This varies according to the time spent in the daycare (half-day, full day) and the child's routine. This requires the provision of a calm and comfortable spot suitable for the need to take a break, rest, or nap. If the daycare has a room that is isolated or closed off, the layout of this napping corner remains permanent. Mattresses and cribs that meet safety standards are in place. Lights are turned off and semi-opaque blinds let in some light so the children can be visible. An educator's presence is required until all of the children are asleep. Once that has happened, the educator can keep an eye over the entire space through an observation window, with the option of adding a transceiver to better hear the children. If the children cannot be observed through a window, the educator must remain in this room for the entire duration of the nap period to provide constant monitoring. Educators without access to a nap room place mattresses in the various corners of the daycare, without rearranging the layout.

## 10.2 Maximizing limited space

Some daycares believe they cannot accommodate such a broad range of corners, due to a lack of space. Even in small spaces, it is possible to provide children with a number of corners by pairing them up. By maximizing the use of space using a few tricks, an educator can create the corners essential to offering a variety of learning opportunities:

- Manipulation/construction corner: Requires storage furnishings and a floor mat;
- Symbolic play corner: Requires storage furnishings and at a minimum a play kitchen and small toy table with benches or chairs;
- Arts & crafts, table play, and meal/snack corners: Combine these three corners with a shared storage piece of furniture for the arts and table play corners;
- Motor skills corner: Requires a floor mat only (format based on the space available);
- Solo corner: Requires only a small space like a cardboard box or unused space between two pieces of furniture along a wall;
- Reading corner: Provide books in all corners to save the space that would otherwise be used by a reading corner. The important aspect is that books are part of the children's world and are perceived as a play item that may be picked up and handled as they wish;
- Infants' corner: Required only when the daycare welcomes children aged 18 months and under;
- Family corner: A small chair at the entrance to the premises, a rocking chair used in the infants' corner, or a chair in the meal/snack corner;
- Get-together corner: Invite the children to sit around the table and lead the discussion at snack time;
- Rest corner: Only if children nap at the daycare. Place mats throughout the layout without moving anything.



## 10.3 Materials

The materials provided are not limited to toys. There are also recyclable materials (plastic containers, cardboard boxes, etc.), objects from nature, tools, commonly used objects (pots and pans, suitcases, etc.), and equipment of all kinds.<sup>92</sup> Materials are:

Arranged to be visible and accessible to children so they can easily pick them up and put them away on their own.

Safe, present no danger, and require regular inspection.

Varied and of different types:<sup>93</sup>

- o Exercise and exploration play: Sensory and motor skills play that produces immediate effects and results and encourages children to repeat their movements. Example: Handling rattles, skipping rope, pulling objects, exploring textures, following a specific physical path, dancing, etc.;
- o Assembly play: Play that consists of putting together, combining, matching, assembling a number of elements to form a whole to attain a specific goal. Example: Beading, making a puzzle, building with blocks, etc.;
- o Symbolic play: Play encouraging children to pretend, copy objects and others, play a role, create scenarios, reflect reality through images or symbols. Example: Dress up, make figurines or puppets talk, invent stories or scenes, copy, pretend, etc.;
- o Rule play: Play with exact instructions to be followed and rules agreed upon by the players. Example: Table play, group games with instructions to follow, perform a sport, etc.

In sufficient quantities to allow a number of children to use them.

Adapted to the children's age and level of development.

Regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Composed of familiar and recycled objects.

Multi-purpose, so children can employ them in various ways and use them more than once.

Distributed in various corners to encourage different usages.

Chosen based on the interest they inspire among the children.

A reflection of the cultural diversity of the children's families.

Focused on promoting a level playing field by encouraging the same interest among girls and boys.

## 10.4 Layout of the outdoor play area

*“When they are outside, children are on average twice as physically active.”<sup>94</sup>*

There are many beneficial effects of outdoor play. Such benefits can be felt in both urban and rural milieus, through playing in the daycare’s yard, the municipal park, or in a wooded area. Outdoor play:

- Plays a role in the development of a child’s physical and psychomotor skills;
- Improves a child’s mental health, emotional well-being, and mood;
- Encourages the development of a child’s creativity because they are playing in a freer environment with fewer constraints than when indoors<sup>95</sup>;
- Provides learning opportunities in terms of risk-taking adapted to their developmental level. Children learn to be self-confident, but also to request help in an appropriate manner and at the right time.

Outdoor play has a beneficial impact on the four dimensions of development. For example, it allows children to take risks and gain confidence in their abilities, develops their psychomotor skills, promotes better eating and sleep, and provides opportunities to handle and transform materials, as well as enriches their vocabulary. Furthermore, the outdoor environment offers children different experiences and sensations including exposure to birds singing, the sound of rain boots in puddles, the sensation of wind on their skin, the smell of fresh-cut grass, the temperature of snow, the texture of the sand under their feet or the soil in their hands, etc.

The yard is an integral part of the daycare. The educator structures the yard based on the season and the children’s interests, while offering a variety of materials and play periods. An outdoor layout with corners encourages free, active play, and a broader range of learning opportunities for the children.<sup>96</sup> Adequate time is allocated for the children to immerse themselves in their play.





## Example

The daycare's educator creates several corners in the outdoor play area<sup>97</sup>:

- A symbolic play corner with a play kitchen, dishes, food, dolls with strollers, dress-up items, a carpentry area and tools;
- A motor skills corner with bikes, balls, hula hoops, and a tunnel;
- An arts and crafts corner with an easel, large sheets of paper, chalk, brushes, bowls of water, and water paints;
- An exploration corner in the sandbox with pails, shovels, dinosaurs, and cars;
- A water games corner with a pool and squirt toys filled with water;
- A shade corner so the children can get out of the sun on hotter days. This corner is also ideal for infants;
- The educator has shelves and bins installed in the shed to properly organize and store the materials.



Some daycares do not have an outdoor yard. They use nearby public and municipal spaces: a park, a soccer field, the woods, etc. Transporting materials becomes a challenge for educators who must make choices. To avoid having to transport materials, educators may be tempted to favour a park with play modules. However, they should be aware that while play modules attract children, researchers have observed that playing in natural environments, i.e. environments with less permanent equipment, increases children's physical activity level.<sup>98</sup> The children will be more active if offered toys requiring motor activity (balls, hula hoops, etc.) and objects from nature (branches, leaves, sand, etc.).<sup>99</sup>

Children have an innate need to move, either in the daycare's outdoor play area or in a park. It is essential that children have access to an environment that allows them to meet their need to be active, both indoors and out.<sup>100</sup>

## Chapter 11

# STRUCTURING ACTIVITIES

From a child's arrival at a community drop-in daycare until their departure, there are activities which include routines, transitions, and indoor and outdoor play periods. The duration of care may vary from a few hours to an entire day, with children experiencing different parts of their usual routine at the daycare. They need stability and repetition to integrate into a new environment. A stable but flexible routine, adapted to the children, helps them develop a sense of security and reduces stress while integrating.



In a balanced, harmonious organization of activities, educators apply the educational intervention process:

- Observe the interests, skills, and needs of each child and the group;
- Organize the time and layout to facilitate free, active play;
- Plan routines, transitions, and open, guided activities;
- Intervene to respond to needs, support behaviours, and contribute to each child's development;
- Reflect and provide feedback on the organization of time, play, layout, interventions, etc.

## 11.1 Daily schedule

Organizing activities starts with establishing a daily schedule. This schedule is stable and follows the same sequence every day. It is flexible and must be adapted to the needs of the children in attendance. This allows the educator to plan, organize, and intervene based on observations. This also gives the children a framework that provides a sense of security due to its regularity.

### Example

*Daily schedule for a full day at a daycare*

*8:00 a.m. Welcome, free active play (inside or out), and progressive arrival of children*

*9:00 a.m. Hand-washing and snack time*

*9:30 a.m. Get-together to chat*

*9:45 a.m. Free active play, open or guided activity*

*10:30 a.m. Dressing/undressing routine and outdoor play*

*11:30 a.m. Hand-washing and meal time*

*12:15 p.m. Nap prep and play suggested by the educator*

*1:00 p.m. Nap and relaxation*

*2:30 p.m. Wake-up and hand-washing 3:00 p.m. Snack time*

*3:30 p.m. Free active play, inside or out, and progressive departure of children*

## 11.2 Activities

Activities, all related to the children's needs, are attributed to routines, transitions, and indoor and outdoor play periods.

Routines are activities that are repeated daily. They are predictable, mandatory, and generally respond to the children's physiological needs (eat, sleep, feel clean, and rest).<sup>101</sup> Appropriate response to these needs contributes to the children's sense of security and builds their self-esteem. When their needs are met, children concentrate better and feel more open to exploring their environment. Routines are thus important in the sequence of activities in the daily schedule. They contribute to a child's development, and provide educators with opportunities conducive to establishing relationships of trust with each child. Routine activities include:

- Welcome and departing;
- Dressing and undressing;
- Get-togethers;
- Hand-washing;
- Snacks and meals;
- Diaper-changing;
- Using bathroom facilities;
- Naps and relaxation.

Transitions are simple, brief, and used to organize the switch from one activity to the next.<sup>102</sup> Transitions are also learning opportunities for children. This requires ingenuity on the part of educators to motivate the children to conclude one activity and start another. Transition activities include:

- Picking up and putting away;
- Changing locations;
- Inevitable wait periods.

Indoor and outdoor play periods are spread out throughout the daily schedule and may be in different forms and for different groups, depending on the educational aims. The following play periods are adaptable to a multi-age group and an active learning approach, while respecting each child's specific needs:

- Free, active play;
- Open activities;
- Guided activities.

### 11.3 Routines

#### Welcome and departing

In a community drop-in daycare, welcoming children as they arrive is somewhat chaotic: Take the time to welcome each family, listen, answer requests, comfort, console, reassure, assist, take notes, and share information. It is important to coordinate the putting away of snacks and personal items, and ensure that each child has what they need, as per the daycare's requirements (diapers, change of clothes, cuddly toy, baby bottle, etc.).

Departure time is not much different. Educators share their observations of the child with the parent, discuss them, return the child's personal effects, etc. This is a very active period of the day.

#### Dressing and undressing

Learning to dress oneself involves a lot of learning for a child. They face numerous challenges that affect their physical and motor development as well as their cognitive, language, social, and emotional development, such as learning to pull up their pants, put shoes on the right feet, share limited cloakroom space with other children, etc. Educators adjust to each child according to their dressing and undressing skills. They plan an adequate amount of time to encourage learning in a calm and relaxed setting.

Educators encourage parents to provide their children with easily adjustable clothing to promote their independence: shoes with Velcro, pants with an elastic waist, neck warmer, mittens, etc. Educators understand that children are capable of undressing before learning to dress themselves. This is evident among certain infants who love to pull off their socks. Educators are familiar with the abilities of children based on their age and adjust their expectations in order to support each child in their learning process. They know that each child is unique and develops at their own pace.



### Get-togethers

In community drop-in daycares, get-togethers are used to have chats, learn nursery rhymes and songs, read a story, and listen to the children's ideas for playing. Since all of the children are together, it is an opportunity to go over certain instructions, share feedback on an earlier activity, or plan upcoming ones while distributing tasks and explaining how the activity will unfold.



### Hand-washing

Hand-washing is one of the most regular routines in childcare settings. Children wash their hands when they arrive at the daycare, before and after eating, after using the bathroom or a diaper change, after blowing their nose, after coughing or sneezing into their hands, after playing outside, and at any other time deemed necessary. To be effective, hand-washing requires that the children follow basic steps. This routine is a major learning experience for children, who are learning to take care of themselves and developing their autonomy.

### Snacks and meals

Snack and meal times are pleasant, relaxed, fun periods. They provide an occasion for all of the children to be together. Some eat on their own, others need help, a few are still on a bottle and others need to be fed their food, but each child eats at their own pace, according to their needs. These periods are ideal for the development of healthy eating habits.

### Diaper-changing

Educators plan a set time for changing diapers. However, they give priority to responding to the child's needs by changing them when needed. As with the previously mentioned activities, this routine provides multiple learning opportunities and is an opportune time to create a special bond. Changing a diaper is a private moment for a child that requires them to develop trust in their educators. A kind, patient, understanding educator who adapts to what they are feeling will help forge this bond of trust.

### Using bathroom facilities

Children use the bathroom as they need to. When it's time to go outside to play and before nap and relaxation time, educators encourage the children to go to the bathroom so they won't have to go during the next activity. Knowing that they can use the bathroom when needed, the children gradually become toilet-trained.

### Naps and relaxation

Since children do not have the same needs for sleep, and there are often infants in the daycare, it is important to set an exact time in the daily schedule for napping, resting, stopping, and relaxing. Respecting the individual needs of each child in terms of sleep is essential, as the rest period aims to sensitize them to their body's different needs, such as moving, eating, and resting. Children thus learn to identify the clues associated with these needs, and each child benefits from this rest period to relax and recharge their batteries.

## 11.4 Transitions

### Picking up and putting away

Picking up and putting away materials is an integral part of activities, and educators allow time for this at the end of a play period. There are many reasons for asking children to pick things up and put them away:

- It is a regular, inevitable task in almost every moment of our lives;
- This is a way to make it easier to find materials;
- It is the best method for organizing the setting so that it is safe and inviting;
- It provides the children with a better view of the materials available;
- It is necessary when several people are using the same space at the same time;
- For the children, this marks the end of a play period and facilitates their understanding of how the day will unfold;
- This encourages responsabilization and autonomy;
- Picking up and putting away also provides children with the opportunity to learn to respect their environment and to pursue their learning while categorizing and sorting play materials.

Children learn through play, so making picking up fun is a strategy that will facilitate this routine.

### Changing locations

Changing locations occurs frequently and is planned with efficiency and safety in mind. In community drop-in daycares, changing places occurs when switching from one room to another (going to the cloakroom, a larger room), using the bathroom (when they are outside of the facility), and during outings. Educators prepare and reassure any children who are feeling insecure about such a transition.

### Inevitable wait periods

Inevitably, there are wait times when one child is ready, hands washed, dressed to go play outside, etc., and they have to wait for the other children to finish getting ready before being able to proceed with the next step. It is important to note that this is a real challenge for children. The more capable the educator is at organizing these times, the more they will become learning opportunities. Providing materials and toys to the children allows them to more easily wait for the next step: eating a snack, going outside, etc. Educators who call children one at a time to wash their hands avoid unnecessary waiting.

### The time spent on routines and transitions

The time spent on routines and transitions covers more than 50% of the day in a group of children 3 to 5 years of age, and up to 80% when there are younger children. The repetition of routines and transitions provides children with extraordinary learning opportunities, including developing their autonomy, language, tolerance to having others nearby, waiting for their turn, having reference points in time, etc.



## 11.5 Indoor and outdoor play periods

*“Children do not play to learn, they learn because they play.”<sup>103</sup>*

Jean Epstein

Of a spontaneous nature, play is above all associated with enjoyment, which is why children are keenly interested in and devote so much time to it. Whatever its type or form, playing involves challenges to face, problems to solve, and rules to be respected. Through play, children explore, interact with, discover, and understand the world around them. They learn and develop at their own pace, while enjoying themselves and respecting their tastes and needs.<sup>104</sup>

Play develops as the child grows. The developmental stages of the child are:<sup>105</sup>

- Solitary play (0 +): The child plays alone, responding to their own needs, and immersing themselves in their play;
- Spectator play (0 +): Children observe, analyze, and try to understand what others are doing and then mimic it, but do not play with them;
- Parallel play (2 years +): The child agrees to having another playing near them, with the same play material but does not share it. The children do not play with a common purpose;
- Associative play (3 years +): Children play together, talk among themselves, and share their toys. They discuss their ideas, but each one has their own goal;
- Cooperative play (4 to 5 years +): Children share a common goal and play in pairs or groups. Each child plays an active role in planning and structuring the play while collaborating with others. They create roles and scenarios for themselves;
- Start of competitive play (6 years +): Children measure their individual performance and compare it to that of others with the goal of improving their skills.<sup>106</sup> They get together to measure themselves versus others to establish superiority and determine who is best.

The educational intervention process<sup>107</sup> (Chapter 7) enables the educator to plan play periods that meet the needs of each child:

- Observation: The educator observes the children to discover their interests, needs, and developmental pace. These observations allow for identifying an educational aim that guides the choice of the appropriate activity, the materials to provide, the layout, and the interventions or assistance required;
- Planning and organization: Educators attribute play periods based on their observations and the principles of active learning. The learning situations offered are a reflection of the educational aims. Educators may also propose an activity that corresponds to their interests or a special theme (special celebrations, the development of social skills, the season of the year, etc.). The educator makes plans based on the children's suggestions and ideas to propose customized play periods. Children are more motivated to actively participate if they play a part in the planning process. Educators organize play periods into three parts (introduction/start, activity focus, reflecting/feedback). They also plan interventions, materials, and the layout of the premises;
- Educational action: During play periods, educators observe, assist, guide, coach, and lead using a democratic approach. They listen to the children's needs and make adjustments depending on the context and their interests;
- Reflecting/feedback: Educators reflect on and assess the play periods offered to the children, assessing their relevance and quality, and ensuring that they are adapted to the children's interests, needs, and developmental pace.

### 11.5.1 Free, active play

Free play is spontaneous and initiated by the child; it has no goal and no rules other than to have fun. Each child is free to choose their corner, the materials they want to use, how they want to use them, and with whom they wish to play (alone or with other children). They are actively involved in their play, mimicking and exaggerating known gestures or situations, enabling them to learn new things. Free play gives children an opportunity to present their personal visions of the world, and is a source of learning that supports all dimensions of development (social and emotional, physical and motor, cognitive and language).<sup>108</sup>

While playing, children develop at their individual pace and according to their needs and interests. They learn to express themselves, to experiment; they build their knowledge base, structure their thoughts, and expand their understanding of the world. They also develop their personality, imagination, creativity, and social skills. Lastly, they learn to interact with their peers and their educators and to solve problems.<sup>109</sup>



Active play includes any fun activity involving movement, which calls upon different parts of the child's body at various intensities (low to high). Having fun is top priority and active play is encouraged, coached, and offered as often as possible so the children enjoy moving about and develop their psychomotor skills. Active play allows the children to develop their physical and motor dimension, but it is also vital to all of the other dimensions. By being active, children gain confidence in their abilities, develop their autonomy, interact and chat with their peers, and enhance their understanding of the world. Outside play periods are conducive to active play because the children have more space to move and to engage in high-intensity play:<sup>110</sup> running, climbing, shouting, cycling, pushing wagons, swinging, chasing each other, practising balancing on a beam, carrying pails of sand, etc.

Physically active children develop habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Moving about enables children to expend excess energy, better manage their emotions, improve their concentration, not to mention all of the other benefits on all dimensions of their development. Active play can easily be incorporated into the daily schedule: dancing, playing ball, walking on all fours to move from one space to another, playing with modelling clay while standing, etc. These play activities can take place inside or outside the daycare.

Free, active play combines both. By playing freely and being active while at play, children experience optimal development.<sup>111</sup>

Educators provide deliberate, active support as well as a reassuring, supervising presence that enables the children to explore in complete confidence. The environment that educators create is consistent with an educational aim that enables children to move about and play freely.<sup>112</sup> They enhance corners with a variety of stimulating materials that encourage the children to actively explore and handle them. Free, active play is recognized by educators as an essential time in which the children are in a learning and problem-solving situation. Educators encourage the children to make plans, think, seek solutions, and use their creativity. They plan enough time (45-60 minutes) for them to fully engage in their play.



## Example

The educator observed and noted down the children's interests when they last attended the daycare. This morning, 6 children are in attendance. The educator reads the notes made on each child to enhance the interest areas and encourage free, active play:

- Mika, 2 years of age, is happiest filling up and emptying containers;
- Judith, 2½ years of age, likes to be able to touch and feel different textures on her hands;
- Rodrigo, 4 years of age, loves playing any game involving balls. He really likes going outside so he can play soccer;
- During chat time, Yumi, 3½ years of age, happily talks about having gone to a restaurant with his parents;
- Eden, 11 months old, enjoys stacking blocks and then pushing the stack over to see what will happen;
- Dyani, 3 years of age, is happiest building things and often involves younger children in her play by talking to them.

*Educational aim: Promote free, active play among children.*

*The educator enhances the corners with new materials:*

- *Exploration corner: A sensory bin with pasta, plates, bowls, glasses, plastic food, etc.;*
- *Motor skills corner: Pails of different sizes for throwing balls, sponges, pompons, game bags;*
- *Symbolic play corner: To play restaurant, the educator provides kitchen materials, paper and pencils for taking orders, and recipe books for choosing menus;*
- *Handling and construction corner: Blocks made of wood, plastic, foam, of different sizes and colours, cars, and animals. The children can explore materials as they wish and add other things as needed.*

### 11.5.2 Activities proposed by the educator

Activities proposed include open activities and guided activities. The educator makes plans based on each child's interests, needs, and developmental pace. To stimulate the children's active learning and encourage their participation, each activity proposed is divided into three parts:<sup>113</sup>

- **Introduction/start:** A brief background, an unusual way of introducing the activity to the children to quickly captivate their attention and motivate them to participate. An object, a photo, a puppet, a question, a short story, or a song may pique the children's interest and curiosity. The educator gives the children an opportunity to plan what they are going to do during the upcoming play period. The children are asked, for example, in which corner, with what materials, and with which children they want to play. The children may change their plans along the way;
- **Activity focus:** This is when the children play and experience active learning. The educator observes and assists them as needed;
- **Reflection/feedback:** Once the activity is over, the educator allows for downtime to learn about the children's experiences during the activity. The children report on what they had wanted to do, what they did do, how they did it, and the solutions they found to the problems they encountered. The act of looking back and being able to talk about it helps children structure their thoughts. Reporting back may take various forms depending on the child's age and the daycare's daily schedule. The children may demonstrate the corner in which they played, describe what they did, or show what they accomplished, as applicable. The educator asks the children questions (closed or open, depending on their language development level) to enable them to reflect upon the actions taken.

### Children who refuse to participate

A child who refuses to participate in an activity proposed by the educator is respected in their choice. As illustrated by the basic principles, each child is unique and is the lead actor in their own development. By accepting the children's choices, the educator respects each child's uniqueness and developmental pace.

If the educator notes that a child is regularly refusing the proposed activities, their role is to try to understand why. They then apply the process of educational intervention, starting with the observation, and note the refusal to participate, the type of game refused, the reactions, what they play with, whether they play alone or with other children, etc. The information gathered allows them to plan and organize interventions to better support this child in their learning, for example, by offering activities or materials that are more in line with their interests.



## Open activities

Open activities call upon the children's imagination and creativity and promote active learning. This type of activity fits perfectly in a multi-age context because it enables each child to use materials based on their interests and developmental pace. Their structure is flexible, allowing the children freedom to act, make choices, take initiative, and to handle and actively explore the materials provided by the educator.

The educator suggests role-playing, a context, theme, or play scenario reflecting the children's interests, needs, and developmental pace. The child decides how the activity will unfold, the steps to be taken, the actions and movements involved, the materials, and how to use them. They structure the activity according to their own interests and needs. The children have an opportunity to plan and organize their play based on the educator's suggestion. There is no expectation of a specific product or result by the end of the activity. Democratic educators provide the children with various learning opportunities and guide them as needed. They take the children's interests into account and focus on the learning process rather than the results.<sup>114</sup>



## Examples

### Indoor open activity

- o *Observation:* The educator notices that Viviane, 3½ years of age, has more difficulty joining in the play of the other children. She loves playing hide-and-seek;
- o *Educational aim:* Facilitate Viviane’s integration into the group;
- o *Introduction/start:* During a get-together, the educator shares their observations with the group: “I’ve noticed that you really like to play hide-and-seek outdoors, but indoors, there aren’t very many places to do so. Could we find a good hiding spot inside?” Four-year-old Saroo finds the solution to the problem: “We could build a hiding place!”
- o *Activity focus:* The children are excited about taking part in the project to build a hiding spot in the daycare. Lucius, 11 months of age, is watching the other children. He crawls around the available materials and mimics the older children by trying to put a blanket over a chair. Saroo is developing language skills while expressing ideas, making compromises, supporting Viviane’s ideas, as she resolved the problem of keeping the blankets in place. Viviane is proud to have been able to help with building the hiding spot. She notices that Lucius is trying to do the same thing, goes to help him copy them, and assists in putting his blanket in place. Once done, Saroo invites the educator to go into the hiding spot with them;
- o *Reflecting/feedback:* Inside the hiding spot, the educator discusses their project with the children. The older ones describe the steps involved in their accomplishment and the younger ones enjoy quiet time near the educator. The latter focuses on the interactions that took place among the children: “Saroo, you congratulated Viviane when she found the solution. That was kind of you. And Viviane, you helped Lucius, and I saw that you really had fun playing together.” The educator leaves the hiding spot in place for the entire day so the children can enjoy it and show it to their parents.

### Outdoor open activity

- o *Observation:* The daycare’s educator has noticed that the children are more involved in their play when their imaginations are stimulated;
- o *Educational aim:* Stimulate the children’s imaginations through nature exploration;
- o *Introduction/start:* When everyone is gathered together, the educator tells the children that there is a dinosaur’s back (snow bank) to explore near the daycare. She asks them if they feel like going there;
- o *Activity focus:* Once on the dinosaur’s back, each child takes on challenges that match their abilities. Mika, 5 years of age, attempts to be king of the mountain by climbing up as fast as possible. Pedro, 15 months old, discovers different sensations: the sound of his boots on the snow, the cold, etc. Then they contemplate the results, clearly impressed. The children notice a forested area, and Salomé, 3½ years of age, says: “Maybe there are dinosaur eggs over there!” The children run off to search for eggs by exploring the woods, having to avoid tree branches, walk through snow, keep their balance, wait for their turn, and take their time. In short, they follow a motor-skills path in nature in which the children experience different challenges. But most of all, they have been able to discover this wooded area full of mystery and magic. At the end of the trail, they find a dinosaur lair. “Shhh! We mustn’t wake up the dinosaur.”
- o *Reflecting/feedback:* The educator asks the children if they found any eggs and how they did so.



## Visual arts in active learning: An open activity

A frequent activity in community drop-in daycares is arts and crafts. Children generally enjoy this type of activity, as do educators. Not to mention that parents are pleased to see their child's psychomotor skills in action. Arts and crafts activities do play a role in community drop-in daycares. However, to promote children's overall development and active learning, visual arts are selected over arts and crafts. In arts and crafts, children do manual work based on the educator's ideas (colouring books, copying, templates), and the resulting product is used as a decoration. In arts and crafts activities, children have to comply with pre-existing ideas, providing them with no opportunity to get to know themselves better or discover something about their environment.

The visual arts discipline provides children with a good way to gain a better grasp of who they are and of their environment. Using a variety of materials and adapted tools (scissors, punch, etc.), they are able to give shape to their own ideas. They are encouraged to transform matter using natural movements, having developed their ideas from sensations and experiences encountered within their environment. Younger children discover the fabrics, textures, and sensations associated with the materials provided. They learn to control their movements and develop their fine motor skills. Older children develop skills that allow them to put their ideas into action. They make and then play with their creation, hence enhancing their symbolic play. Drawing sparks interest in reading and writing. Before learning to write the letters of the alphabet, they must first learn to draw lines and circles.<sup>115</sup>

### Example

#### Visual arts open indoor activity

- o *Observation: The educator has noted that the children spend less time in the arts corner, and is not sure of what they have learned in terms of fine motor skills;*
- o *Educational aim: Support children's fine motor skills development;*
- o *Introduction/start: During a visual arts activity, the educator suggests that the children make a collage. The necessary materials are made available to them (liquid and stick glue, paper, cardboard, cotton balls, feathers, sticks, corks, bits of cloth, tissue paper, aluminum foil, cardboard tubes, small cardboard boxes, scissors, etc.);*
- o *Activity focus: The children choose their materials and glue all sorts of objects together. During the activity, the educator observes the children: How are they managing with the materials? How are they acting with one another? Are they sharing suggestions? Are they helping others? Are they focused on what they are doing? Are they showing any interest or do they seem bored? To help answer these questions, the educator asks Simone how she wants to go about achieving her goal: "What do you want to glue? How are you going to do it?" Matthiew, 18 months old, applies glue on a piece of cardboard. He selects a cork and enjoys gluing it and pulling it off over and over again. Jasmine, 3 years old, wants to punch a hole in a cardboard tube to be able to put a stick through it. She asks the educator for help. Rémi, who is 4 years old, loves to cut aluminum foil with scissors. He glues lots of pieces of foil on a cardboard box to build a robot;*
- o *Reflecting/feedback: As a group, the children then present their creations to the others. The educator notes what each child has learned: You know how to hold a crayon, use glue, assemble various parts, you pay attention to detail, you can solve problems, you are creative, you look proud of your creation, etc. The children, by age, comment on what they made, and then go off to play with their items during free, active play periods.*

A democratic intervention style contributes to a child's overall development using visual arts, under the observation of an educator who has confidence in them, their ideas, and their abilities. Children learn actively and develop their autonomy, knowing that a considerate educator is available to assist them.

## Guided activities

Guided activities are planned with specific educational aims in mind. They have strict rules and are conducted in a specific sequence. They do little in terms of respecting the uniqueness of each child compared to open activities. An educator leads the activity, which gives the children little leeway. Guided activities are nonetheless interesting, however, as they enable children to have new experiences proposed by the educator. They are often presented to the group as a whole, which promotes the development of social skills and a feeling of belonging at the daycare, while creating a bond with the educator. An activity may be adapted to become an open activity to give children a bigger role or to follow the principles of active learning. Examples of guided activities include having a discussion, singing a song, engaging in specific motor-skill activities, reading a story, gathering everyone together, etc. <sup>116</sup>

### Examples

#### Indoor guided activity

- o *Observation: The educator notices that some children in the group do everything very quickly and don't take time to stop. They enjoy moving about, especially to the sounds of music;*
- o *Educational aim: Help children to develop a sense of rhythm;*
- o *Introduction/start: The educator uses a drum to pique the children's interest. Sitting in the get-together corner, they gently tap on the drum, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. The children join the educator and try the drum;*
- o *Activity focus: The educator suggests that the children move about and dance to the drum's rhythm. When the educator taps slowly, the children move slowly; when the educator taps quickly, the children move faster. The children are then asked if they would like to play the drum, and are provided a few drums. They are happy to be able to create different rhythms. Marcos, 12 months of age, enjoys clapping his hands to the sound of the drum. Helena, 2½ years old, dances to her own rhythm. She says "more" when the pace of the drum beat is quick. Hubert, 4 years of age, takes this play very seriously. He is attentive and very pleased to take the educator's place;*
- o *Reflecting/feedback: During the activity, the educator recorded the children's musical performances, and they listen to them at lunch time. Laughter is on the menu.*

#### Outdoor guided activity

- o *Observation: The educator notes that 3-year-old Mario is able to say "No" when experiencing frustration. He is now ready to learn to identify the emotions he is experiencing;*
- o *Educational aim: Help Mario identify his emotions;*
- o *Introduction/start: Under the shade of a big tree, the educator invites the children to sit down together. The educator tells a short story about a child who has a hard time identifying their emotions. The children are asked if they, at times, find it difficult to describe how they feel;*
- o *Activity focus: The educator places several pictograms of various emotions in a bag. Each child is invited to pull an emotion out of the bag. The child identifies or imitates the emotion on the pictogram. The educator has a small mirror in their bag, for children wanting to look at themselves as they do their imitation. The youngest watch the others' faces with interest, and the older ones enjoy acting the part and exaggerating their facial expressions;*
- o *Reflecting/feedback: With the children, the educator posts laminated pictograms in the yard's solo corner so they can be seen at all times. After lunch, the educator posts them around the solo corner of the facility with the children. These gestures provide an opportunity to talk to the children once more about the importance of identifying one's emotions.*



## Chapter 12

# THE EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM

This section can be used to plan an educational platform for community drop-in daycares framed by the theoretical foundations and principles of the preceding chapters. The educational platform is basically the educational program unique to a community organization. It is developed by a committee composed of various partners, including the manager, the person in charge of the community drop-in daycare, the educators, user parents, and members of the board of directors. It is based on the theory of the *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program and on the unique reality specific to the community drop-in daycare. It is a reference, information, and support tool that helps ensure coherence and continuity in interventions.

The educational platform makes it possible to determine how the *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program will be applied, while taking into account the uniqueness of that specific community drop-in daycare.

Developing an educational platform leads to reflection on all aspects of what constitutes quality daycare. Such reflection is vital because improving education quality must start from a shared understanding of the educational mission and the identification of the best ways to attain it. It is crucial that each educator understand their role with the children and their parents. To succeed in doing so, it is helpful to discuss it with work colleagues, to read the educational program, to learn more about recent research in early childhood, and to plan specific times to stimulate such reflections.

Drafting an educational platform takes time, realistically taking several months. This exercise regularly leads to certain things being called into question. This is an opportunity to better understand why things happen as they do, and how the committee wants them to proceed in the future. Improvements are frequently made to educational practices when developing an educational platform.

An educational platform has numerous advantages:

- o It guides the manager when selecting educators;
- o It is conducive to consistency in interventions among educators;<sup>117</sup>
- o It informs parents of the educational mission and ways in which it is applied.

Holding meetings, taking the time for discussion, reflecting, obtaining added information, and improving practices based on recommended approaches are all strategies that facilitate the development of an educational platform.



## 12.1 Steps involved in developing an educational platform

1. Create a committee responsible for developing the educational platform. Verify that all committee partners understand and are motivated to carry out this project, which may extend over a period of several months;
2. Choose a person to be in charge of drafting the platform. This person will have the following roles: inform others of, prepare for, and chair meetings, as well as consult with the committee's various partners. Finally, this person drafts a document. The project leader sets the pace. However, the educational platform is not the product of a single person, but rather of the entire team, so everyone is motivated to develop this indispensable tool;<sup>118</sup>
3. Schedule time based on anticipated frequency (weekly, monthly) for the project leader (preparing meetings, drafting, etc.) and the committee's partners (meetings, research);
4. Select relevant content to be included in the educational platform;
5. Reflect upon and research each content section;
6. Draft a first version of each content section, then have it validated by the committee;
7. Have the committee validate the final version;
8. Present the platform to the rest of the team and to user parents.

## 12.2 Contents of an educational platform

The following contents for information to be included in an educational platform are suggested. Each community drop-in daycare builds its own platform based on its specific characteristics, approach, and individual vision.

### Educational mission

Jointly agree upon the educational mission of the community drop-in daycare. All community organizations have a mission that is specific to them. Regardless of the specific characteristics of these different missions, they generally all support and assist their children's families. The educational mission of a community drop-in daycare is directly related to that of the community organization.

### Educational values

Consult committee partners to reach a consensus on the five most important educational values. Educational values become concrete by establishing how they are to be experienced in the community drop-in daycare.

### Pedagogical theories and approaches

In any given platform, it is necessary to define the characteristics specific to the daycare. The recommended pedagogical theories and approaches, as well as the methodology for their application, make each daycare unique. The pedagogical theories and approaches recommended in the educational program that are relevant to include in the educational platform are as follows:

The 5 basic principles

The theory of attachment

Humanist approach

The ecological approach

The family-centred approach

Active learning

The educator's educational role

The educational intervention process

## Educational aims

An educational aim is the goal that guides the learning situations to which the children are exposed.<sup>119</sup> The committee chooses several educational aims that will guide all of the learning situations provided at the community drop-in daycare. An educational aim does not identify an exact expected result, but rather stimulates an aspect of the child's development. Here the committee describes the four dimensions of a child's development and how they will be stimulated and supported in the community drop-in daycare.

## Daily schedule

Including daily schedules for the community drop-in daycare provides a good opportunity to reflect upon the functioning of the daycare in terms of management and time organization. The way to start and link each activity (its sequence in the day, its duration) are associated with the recommended approaches and educational aims. If a daycare adheres to the basic principle that each child is unique, it will respect an infant's need for sleep, regardless of when they need it. If a daycare has the educational aim of facilitating the children's autonomy, it will provide sufficient time in the cloakroom for getting dressed to go outside. The daily schedule remains flexible and adaptable to the children's needs.

## Activities

Assign various activities in the daily schedule: routines, transitions, and indoor and outdoor play periods. In this section, the committee focuses on the role of play in the daily lives of the children at the daycare, especially the reasons motivating this choice.

## Layout

The layout provides children with a multitude of learning opportunities. The premises of the community drop-in daycare are arranged with serious thought, based on recommended approaches, including that of active learning. Include in the educational platform a diagram showing the corners and a general list of the materials in each of them as a reference for the educators. This will ensure the layout remains constant and reassuring for all of the children.

## Other characteristics

A community drop-in daycare has characteristics that make it unique and that are the focus of the educational practices used. These characteristics are to be included in the educational platform and may be of a varied nature, involving: enhancing francization, promoting healthy life habits, expanding openness to cultural diversity, describing programs used to develop social skills, promoting equal relationships, or preventing sexual abuse, etc.



# CONCLUSION

The *Growing in a Community Drop-in Daycare* educational program is specifically adapted to daycare's mission and specifications, making it a must-have reference for educators and managers. The AHGCQ emphasizes the instructional role of educators, the pedagogical support role of managers, basic principles, theoretical foundations, and pedagogical approaches behind the educational program. It is designed to support ownership of these concepts, while stressing the importance of applying them to each individual daycare environment. The educational program is an opportunity for educators and managers to explore their educational practices and to embark on a progressive approach.

The educational program understands the importance of educational quality when it comes to healthy, balanced child development. It highlights the child's role in learning and the importance of the educator's support in overall child development. The focus is on active learning, where children are the lead actors of their own development. The educational process involves tailoring educational activities and periods of daily life and play to each child's needs. Educators prepare the room and offer healthy, safe, diversified, versatile, and accessible materials for learning opportunities, stimulating each child's curiosity and imagination. Educators develop a secure attachment relationship with children, encouraging them to explore and discover the world around them. By building a trusting relationship with parents, they create a lasting partnership that will be essential for the child's successful development.



A young girl with brown hair in two pigtails, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and red shorts, is sitting on a stack of several books. She is holding a large, open book with a yellow cover and looking down at it. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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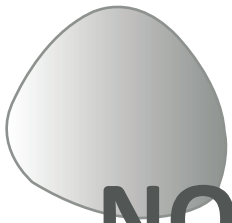
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# **NOTES**

## **ON WHAT I LEARNED**

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A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for writing notes.

This English edition has been made possible by the generous contribution of the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN).



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