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Alberta's Early Learning
and Care Framework

Reflection and Planning Guide

play participation possibilities 

Reflection and Planning Guide

Overview



This section supports early learning and child care educators in their reflection and planning processes. The reflection and planning guide assumes a strong, capable image of the child and family, described in the previous documents, *The Image of the Child: A Mighty Learner and Citizen and A Practice of Relationships: Your Role as an Early Learning and Child Care Educator*. Within the Alberta curriculum framework, content begins with the experiences of children and engages educators as co-learners, co-researchers and co-imagers of possibilities. In these roles, educators are encouraged to make use of a **co-inquiry** process¹ and emergent curriculum² planning in ways that notice and name what children are doing in their play, learning and development; reflect and interpret using the curriculum goals and children's dispositions to learn; and then, co-imagine possibilities with children, families and colleagues for further exploration and play. The physical and responsive environment—including time, space, materials, and participation—changes to reflect how educators make meaning of the curriculum that children are already engaged in through this emergent and reflective process.

As co-learners, co-researchers, and co-imagers of possibilities, you are:

- **Observing and documenting** what children are doing in the environment—with others, with materials, and within the organization of time. Being curious about what children are doing and wanting to accomplish in their play, learning and development situates you as a co-learner alongside them. Your recorded observations might be an assortment of many different forms of documentation, such as photos, video, audio recording, anecdotal notes, and collected artifacts made by children and/or scribed words expressed by children. As you revisit and reflect on your documentation you might begin to see patterns in children's play, such as continued interests, repeated use of objects, common play groups.



- **Reflecting and interpreting your observations and also reflecting on your observations** and documentation may cause you to have further questions. You may begin to wonder: How are other children using this play space? In what other situations does this child explore her persistence? What other natural materials will encourage seeking for these children? What other materials would nurture his participation in play? In what other ways does this child demonstrate caring for others? Think about what you saw children doing and trying to accomplish. What surprised you? You may have questions for the child's family or your colleagues in regards to how a child is approaching particular ideas, materials and social play experiences.

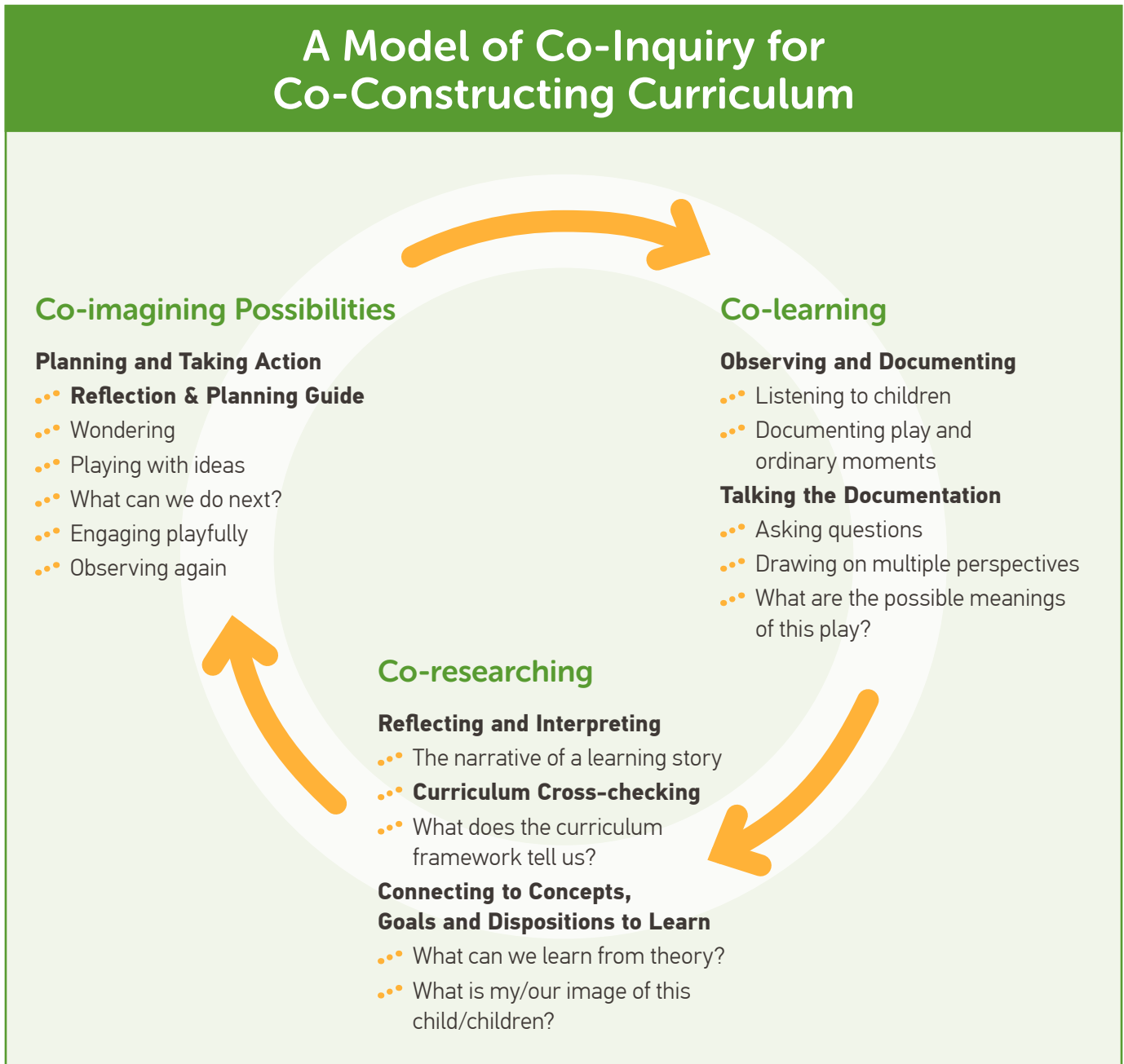
The curriculum framework goals can be used to interpret your observations of the children's play, learning, and development. As a co-researcher you may also gather insights from families and colleagues to help you understand more deeply what children are doing or trying to accomplish in their play, learning, and development. Seeking additional information and insights from children, families, and colleagues, as well as, workshops, professional journals and books, and conferences can help you to further understand your observations and reflections of children's experiences and your curriculum decisions.

- **Planning and taking action** to provide further experiences that invite children to pursue their ideas and theories, challenge ideas, explore, invent, create, and play in active ways that engage children's senses and whole body movement. Your observation and documentation, and reflection and interpretation of what children already know and can do and/or are trying to do in their play, learning, and development helps you to make further curriculum decisions that can nurture and support their efforts. Co-imagining possibilities is made more dynamic as you invite the children, families, and colleagues to invent and create further opportunities to expand on children's experiences. Your curriculum decisions are made visible in the design of a responsive play and learning environment and the design of care routines, as well as your interactions with children and families.



The co-inquiry process and emergent curriculum planning is cyclical. When you observe and document, reflect on and interpret, and plan and take action in ways that expand and extend children's play, learning, and development, and nurture their **dispositions to learn**, you create a **responsive care**, play and learning environment. A responsive environment reflects each child as a strong, resourceful, and capable mighty learner and citizen.

A Model of Co-Inquiry for Co-Constructing Curriculum



Inspired by Abramson, S. (2012). Co-Inquiry: Documentation, research, action.



How to read and use the Reflection and Planning Guide

At first glance, you might read the *Reflection and Planning Guide* (sample on page 8) from top to bottom and left to right. This is not the only way to read the chart. As you become more familiar with a co-inquiry process and emergent curriculum planning that originates with children, you may start to explore the ideas in the guide from multiple points of entry.

To begin, however, reading from left to right across the top of the guide, the title *Environments for Learning and Care: Time, Space, Materials, Participation* is followed by seven dimensions of the environment. These statements are intended to provoke you to think about and look at the playroom environment that you share with children and families. Words and statements such as offer; provide and model; talk and reflect on; model, facilitate, and scaffold; welcome and invite; plan and participate; and be intentional in what you model, are intended to inspire you to take action in collaboration with children, families, and colleagues.

Reading from top to bottom along the left side of the chart, five dispositions to learn are listed: I/we are playing, I/we are seeking, I/we are participating, I/we are persisting, and I/we are caring. Children demonstrate these **dispositions to learn** in many ways such as the dimensions that are expanded on in the adjacent boxes. *In Mighty Learners: Nurturing Children's Dispositions to Learn*, dispositions to learn are described as

- coming from within each child and emerging over time
- inclinations that educators and others can nurture, strengthen, or diminish through our everyday interactions with each child in the social context of learning and living
- inclinations that each child draws upon in both new and familiar learning experiences
- having culturally specific meanings and value revealed through family, social, and cultural practices and traditions

The third area of the Reflection and Planning Guide stands ready for you to complete. The sample provides one possible set of questions related to one disposition: I/we are playing. The relationship between children's **dispositions to learn** and the physical and relational environment is complex. We use the combination "I/we" intentionally to remind us that care, play, and learning are always both individually and socially constructed.



These questions examine how a child or group of children are experiencing play, playing, and playfulness through the arrangement of spaces, organization of time, and choices of materials present in the early learning and child care environment. Our intention is that you will use this [Reflection and Planning Guide](#) by transforming or replacing these questions with reflective questions that help you to understand children in the context of your playroom space—the physical and relational environment.

For Example:

Educators with a group of toddlers notice that one child has been playing by himself. They notice that when another child comes close, he moves away. At first glance, the educators did not think much about his distance; however when his isolated play persisted they used the reflection and planning guide as a way to understand what might be happening for the young child within the larger group.

The educators changed the reflective questions in the following way to help them understand this child as a participant.

- What is this child telling me or showing me about how he **participates** with ideas on his own and with ideas from others?
- What experiences and materials invite his **participation** with ideas and/or others?
- How do I help him to talk about and think about how he **participates** with ideas and others?
- How can we support, scaffold, and facilitate the children's **participation** through sharing their ideas and interests with others, including families?
- Do we offer the children uninterrupted blocks of time and flexible spaces so that children can collaborate with others around ideas?
- How do we model our own **participation** with ideas and others for the children to see?



- How do we recognize and document the ways children **participate** such as listening, observation, active participation, sharing ideas, turn-taking, and/or negotiating over materials?
- How do we invite families to share ideas and insights about how they **participate** with ideas and with others?

How has this guide been used by others?

In the development of this curriculum framework, educators from participating child care programs were invited to trial the *Reflection and Planning Guide*. The following are two examples of how the guide supported educators in their work with children and families.

One child care centre used the guide to plan a family evening. They changed the questions to ask themselves what to plan in relation to **time, space, materials, and participation**. They used the dispositions to learn (**playing, seeking, participating, persisting, and caring**) to think about how they might invite families to actively participate during the event. They reported that the event was a huge success and more dynamic because of the different ways the guide helped them to think about the experience.

An educator was working to create documentation of children's word play through rhyme and word patterns. She used the sample questions of the *Reflection and Planning Guide* to help her talk about and reflect on the experiences of the children. She reported that the guide helped her to see how her role in the children's word play extended and deepened the children's playful exploration of rhyme and patterns.



Reflection and Planning Guide Sample

Environments for Care and Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space • Time • Materials • Participation 		Offer choices of interesting and meaningful experiences that are familiar, novel, and appropriately challenging.	Provide and model multiple forms of literacies that offer children diverse and meaningful ways to express ideas, explore theories, and represent their ideas and feelings.	Talk and reflect on learning and thinking as ways to build children's knowledge of positive learning dispositions.	Model, facilitate, and scaffold children's learning skills for inquiry, problem solving, and representation through purposeful experiences.
		Welcome and invite family participation and insights regarding children's dispositions to learn.	Plan appropriate blocks of time and participate with children as they work on joint ventures, pursue inquiry, develop theories and solve problems, and represent ideas.	Be intentional in what you model for young children. Model your dispositions to learn that support a capable image of a mighty learner.	
		Sample			
I/we are playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventing, creating, imagining • Telling and directing stories • Exploring, representing • Taking risks in/for learning 	<p>"I/we are playing..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the children telling me, or showing me, about how they play out their ideas? • What choices of experiences and materials do I make available that encourage the children to invent, create, and imagine? • How do I help children to talk about and think about their play and playful experiences? • How do I support, scaffold, and facilitate children's skills for collaboration, theory building, authoring, and directing in joint and individual endeavours? • Do I offer uninterrupted blocks of time and flexible spaces for children to play with real-world and/or imaginary ideas? • How do I model my own playfulness in the environment for children to see? • How do I recognize and document the children's playfulness, creativity, theory building, and imaginative thinking in joint and individual endeavours? • How do I invite family participation and insights that celebrate, honour, and value children's play? 			
I/we are seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning, wondering, curious • Exploring with our senses • Solving problems 				
I/we are participating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with others • Listening to, sharing ideas, thoughts, and feelings • Negotiating, taking turns, observing 				
I/we are persisting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persevering with challenges and/or difficulties • Trying strategies • Asking for help • Reaching our own goals 				
I/we are caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping • Caring about our families, others, and ourselves • Caring for the world and living things 				

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Endnotes

¹ Perry, G., Henderson, B., & Meier, D.R. (Eds.). (2012). *Our inquiry, our practice: Undertaking, supporting, and learning from early childhood teacher research(ers)*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

² Stacey, S. (2009). *Emergent curriculum in early childhood settings: From theory to practice*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf.

Fu, V. R., Stremmel, A. J., & Hill, L. T. (2002). *Teaching and learning: Collaborative exploration of the Reggio Emilia approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

³ The dispositions to learn recognized in this curriculum framework have been identified through a process of consultation with educators and parents.

Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in early childhood settings: Learning stories*. London, England: Sage.

Carr, M., & Claxton, G. (2002). Tracking the development of learning dispositions. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 9(1), 9-37.

This is the citation for the Co-Inquiry Model Chart:

Abramson, S. (2012). Co-inquiry: Documentation, communication, action. In G. Perry, B. Henderson, & D.Meier (Eds.), *Our inquiry, our practice: Undertaking, supporting, and learning from early childhood teacher research(ers)* (pp. 147-157). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.





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