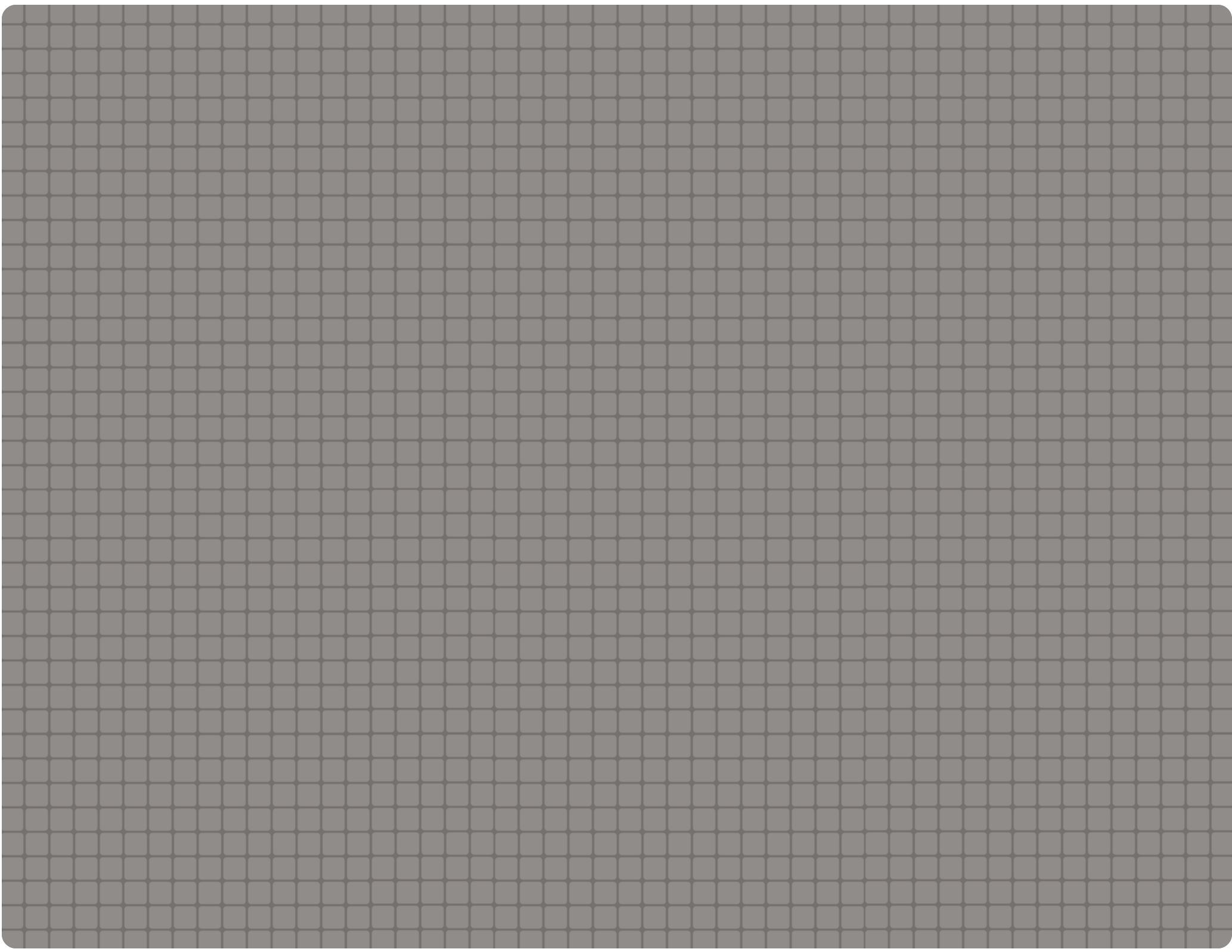




# *Meeting Early Childhood Needs*

QUÉBEC'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR CHILDCARE SERVICES  
UPDATE



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UPDATE

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# Message from the Minister



I am proud to present the update to the educational program entitled **Meeting Early Childhood Needs** and intended for all childcare establishments of Québec. Children are our most precious asset. It is vital that we ensure their harmonious development in an environment that is both safe and stimulating. The content of this document clearly underscores this point. In addition to reiterating the importance of offering each child high-quality services, this program provides for the putting in place of activities fostering the child's global development and social skills.

It has been ten years since the first educational program was published. The evolution of the family and society, the development of knowledge related to children, the development of the childcare establishment network and recent legislative amendments have guided the revision of this program.

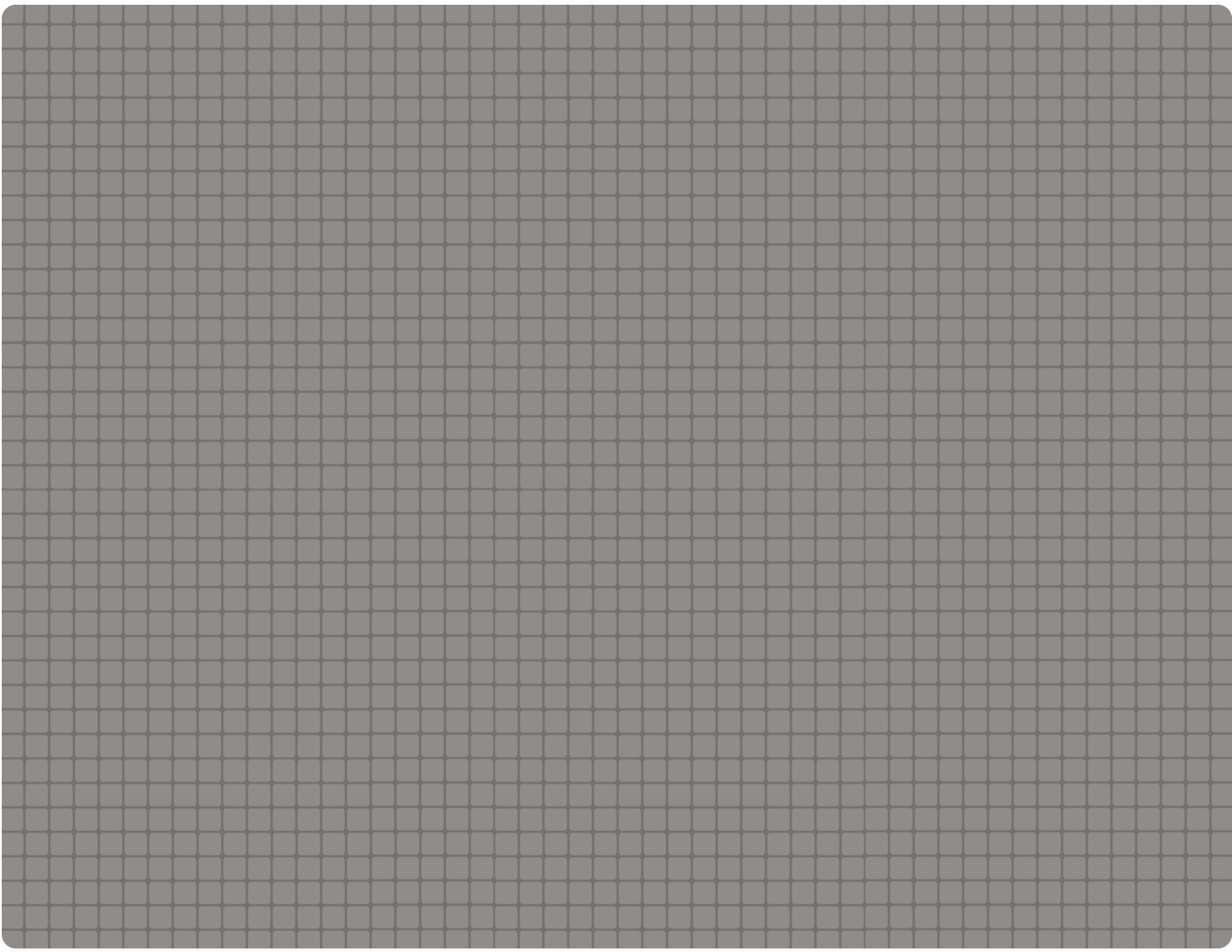
This document is the result of a close partnership calling on the expertise of individuals working in various activity fields. I would like to thank all those people who have contributed to it.

All the discussions surrounding the writing of this document were motivated by a common objective: that of offering children the best possible chances of developing in a context of fun and learning.

It is my hope that together, we will continue our collaboration to offer the children of Québec a highly stimulating and enriching environment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Courchesne". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Michelle Courchesne  
Minister of Families



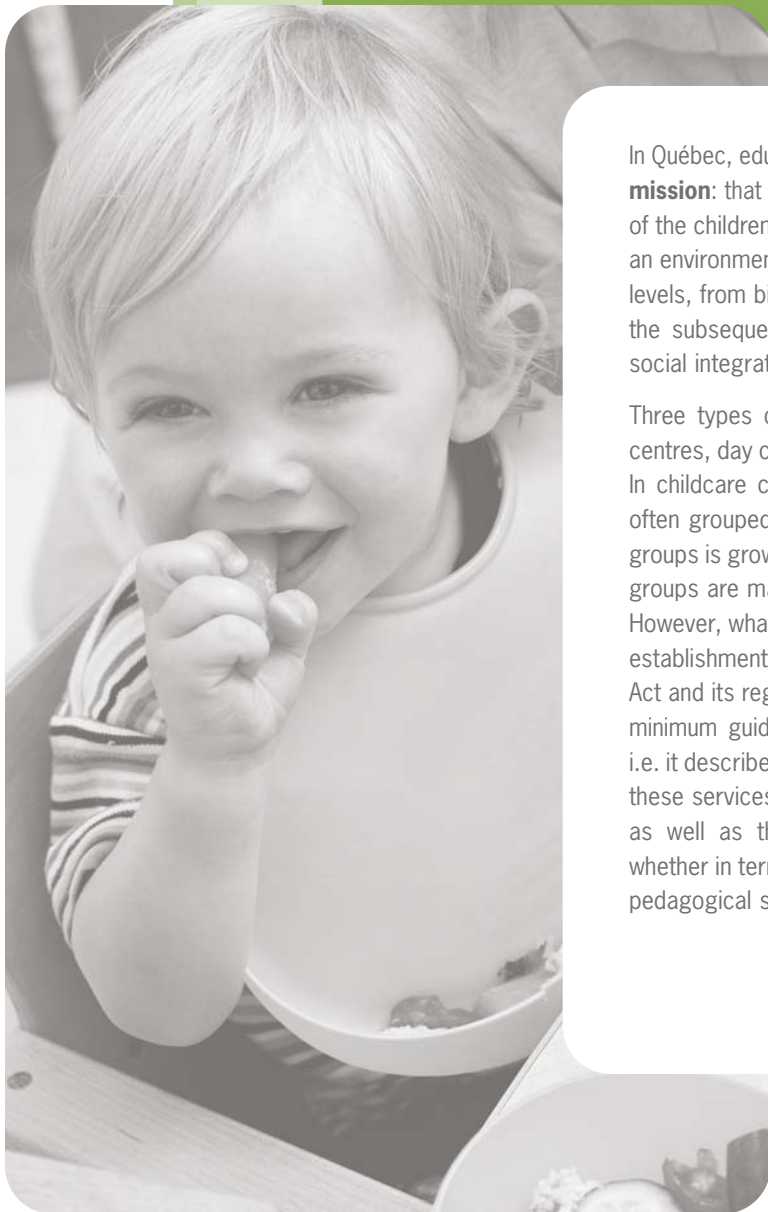
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# Introduction



In Québec, educational childcare services have a **threefold mission**: that of seeing to the well-being, health and safety of the children entrusted to them, that of offering children an environment likely to stimulate their development at all levels, from birth to school, and finally, that of preventing the subsequent appearance of learning, behavioural or social integration problems.

Three types of settings offer these services: childcare centres, day care centres and home childcare operations. In childcare centres and day care centres, children are often grouped by age, although the number of multi-age groups is growing, whereas in home childcare operations, groups are mainly made up of children of different ages. However, whatever their method of grouping, all childcare establishments are subject to the Educational Childcare Act and its regulation.<sup>1</sup> This legal framework stipulates the minimum guidelines for ensuring the quality of services, i.e. it describes the obligations of the individuals who offer these services: educators and home childcare providers, as well as the various standards that must be met, whether in terms of staff training, children/educator ratio, pedagogical support or other issues.

Regardless of whether childcare services are offered in childcare centres, day care centres or home childcare operations, **all childcare services must notably:**

**apply an educational program** comprising activities which seek to:

- 1° foster children's overall development, particularly their emotional, social, moral, cognitive, language, physical and motor development;
- 2° help children to gradually adapt to life in society and to integrate harmoniously.

The educational program also includes promotional and preventive services aimed at providing an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle, healthy eating habits and behaviour that have a positive effect on children's health and well-being.<sup>2</sup>

Published for the first time in 1997,<sup>3</sup> the Educational Program for Child Care Centres has been revised and enriched in order to better support childcare personnel and home childcare providers in their work with children and to help them update their role **in a context that has undergone several changes in recent years.**

Over the years, **Québec families** have undergone a number of transformations which have impacted the development of children. As a general rule, women are having their children later in life than they did in the past, a very large majority of women remain in the work market even when their children are under five years of age, and fathers are more present. More than one in two children now attends a childcare establishment before entering school,<sup>4</sup> and an ever-growing number of children come from one-child families, **which explains the greater importance of the socialization mission** of childcare establishments. Several children will experience a parental separation, a transition period, followed by a family recomposition and various types of childcare arrangements and some will have to adapt to the birth of a half-brother or a half-sister. Today's family trajectories are increasingly diversified and childcare establishments must take note of this reality.<sup>5</sup>

**At the social level**, our lifestyle is becoming increasingly passive: more time spent watching television and on the computer, increase in the consumption of junk food, less time devoted to physical activity and consequently, a rise in weight-related problems, even among children, **which explains the greater importance that children acquire healthy lifestyles early on**, both at home and in a childcare setting. Moreover, due notably to the omnipresence of advertising, the incentive to consume is also becoming increasingly pronounced, making it all the more difficult, and consequently all the more important, for today's children to **learn how to delay the satisfaction of their desires**.

**Knowledge related to child development** has also progressed enormously in the last ten years. Examples include knowledge on the development of the brain and knowledge related to learning. Through the educational program, educational childcare establishments must also be well versed in this new knowledge and take it into account in their day-to-day operations.

Finally, major changes have also taken place in **the educational childcare environment** in recent years: rapid increase in the number of subsidized spaces; holding and publication of the *Grandir en qualité*<sup>6</sup> survey, which made it possible to identify the network's strengths and weaknesses and which provides numerous avenues for the on-going improvement of its quality; passage of the Educational Childcare Act followed by its regulation, which notably created home childcare coordinating offices; and finally, greater professional recognition for workers in this sector as the result of pay equity legislation.

These changes concern childcare personnel and home childcare providers who must not only see to the care and safety of children, but also offer them living and supervision conditions that are likely to foster their overall development and to help them integrate harmoniously in Québec society by introducing them to values that our society cherishes: self-respect, respect for others and the environment, peaceful resolution of conflicts, equality between sexes and individuals, acceptance of differences, sharing and solidarity.

The educational program is made up of **two parts. The first one, more theoretical**, recalls the objectives of childcare services and the program's goals. It goes on to describe the theoretical foundations on which the program is based, the basic principles that should guide educational interventions and the various dimensions of child development which the childcare establishment must endeavour to support.

**The second, more practical**, presents the various stages in the educational intervention process with children as well as the different intervention styles, including the one favoured by the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés. It also illustrates how these principles and orientations can find tangible expression in the way in which the activities proposed to children are structured, the premises are laid out and educators interact with parents.

However, these two parts form **an inseparable whole**, and the life of a childcare establishment requires a constant to and fro between the two.

1. QUÉBEC, *Educational Childcare Act: R.S.Q., c. S-4.1.1*, [Québec], Éditeur officiel du Québec, up to date as of March 15, 2007; QUÉBEC, *Educational Childcare Regulation: R.S.Q., c. S-4.1.1, r. 2*, [Québec], Éditeur officiel du Québec, up to date as of March 28, 2007.
2. QUÉBEC, *Educational Childcare Act, op. cit.*, s. 5.
3. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE L'EMPLOI, DE LA SOLIDARITÉ SOCIALE ET DE LA FAMILLE, *Educational Program for Child Care Centres*, Sainte-Foy, Les Publications du Québec, 1997, 38 p.
4. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE LA FAMILLE, DES AÎNÉS ET DE LA CONDITION FÉMININE, *Un portrait statistique des familles au Québec*, 2005 edition, Québec, Le Ministère, p. 236.
5. CONSEIL DE LA FAMILLE ET DE L'ENFANCE, *Prendre en compte la diversité des familles*, Québec, Le Conseil, 2005, 123 p.
6. C. DROUIN et al., *Grandir en qualité 2003. Québec Survey on the Quality of Educational Daycare*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2004, 597 p.

### 1 Supporting the Quality of Educational Childcare Services

#### *In brief*

**Educational childcare services** have six objectives: welcoming children and meeting their needs, ensuring their health, safety and well-being, promoting the equality of chances, contributing to their socialization, providing support to their parents and finally, facilitating their entry into school.

For its part, **the educational program** has four objectives: ensuring children high-quality childcare services, serving as a reference tool for individuals working in a childcare setting, fostering greater consistency between these various settings and finally, promoting the continuity of all the interventions made with families and with young children.

**A high-quality childcare establishment** is one that is capable of recognizing the needs of children and meeting them. It is also an establishment that intervenes with children by taking into account their level of development. Moreover, it is one or more adults who team up with the parents of the children attending the childcare establishment. There are **four main dimensions** of a high-quality childcare establishment:

- **the quality of the interactions between the childcare personnel or home childcare providers and children;**
- **the quality of the interactions between the childcare personnel or home childcare providers and parents;**
- **the structuring and layout of the premises;**
- **the structuring and diversity of the activities offered to children.**

This educational program begins by defining the foundations, principles and values underlying the actions and interventions of Québec's educational childcare establishments, gives them meaning and ensures their quality. It goes on to establish guidelines to support educational childcare establishments in the putting in place of optimal living and development conditions that will be offered to children attending these establishments.

## 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES

### 1.1.1 Welcoming children and meeting their needs

Childcare establishments first offer a warm welcome to the children entrusted to them and accept these children as they are, according to their level of physiological and psychological maturity. **Time management** in these establishments is **flexible** and adapted to the children. While parents live according to the pace of adults and workers, childcare establishments live according to the rhythm of children. Premises are also arranged to meet children's need for movement and activity, as well as their need for rest and calm.

Educators and home childcare providers also follow an **individualized approach** during meal, sleep and hygiene periods. Ideally, the childcare establishment avoids changing the educator too often in order to allow children to form stable emotional attachments that will help them grow and develop. Finally, the establishment proposes activities that enable children to develop at all levels: emotional, physical, motor, social, moral, cognitive and language.

### 1.1.2 Ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children

Childcare establishments ensure the health, safety and well-being of the children entrusted to them by complying with the safety standards to which these establishments are subject under the Educational Childcare Act.

They also offer children an **environment that is conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle**, healthy eating habits and the adoption of behaviours that have a positive influence on children's health and well-being. Childcare establishments contribute, for example, to making children aware of the importance of eating healthy food and of the enjoyment derived from being active, running, jumping and playing outdoors. Moreover, childcare establishments are concerned about both the mental and physical health of children.

Finally, childcare establishments apply the public health care measures recommended to prevent the transmission of infections.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1.3 Promoting the equality of chances

Childcare establishments also aim to promote the equality of chances between children, regardless of their social, economic, cultural or religious background so that everyone can achieve personal growth and develop harmoniously, be successful at school and one day actively participate in society.

They notably seek to promote **equality between girls and boys**, in particular by combating sexual and sexist stereotypes. Childcare establishments also welcome **children having special needs**, such as children with a disability or those who are developmentally delayed.<sup>8</sup> They work at promoting respect for differences and at giving all children access to a healthy and stimulating childhood.

They can even play a **detection role** by drawing, for example, the attention of parents and inviting them to consult their health and social services centre (CSSS, CLSC component), if necessary, in those cases where the child shows one or more symptoms, as well as a **preventive role** in those cases where, for various reasons, a child's development is not taking place under optimal conditions: children living in a context of vulnerability or who may be victims of neglect or abuse.

### 1.1.4 Contributing to the socialization of children

In this text, socialization refers to **adaptation to life in society and the ability to integrate harmoniously**. This term also designates the process whereby children gradually adopt the rules, norms and values of the society in which they live. Socialization begins in the child's family (primary socialization) and continues in the childcare establishment and then at school (secondary socialization).

In a childcare establishment, educators and home childcare providers seek to harmonize relations between children and adults as well as those among children in order that everyone can find his or her place in the group and play a fulfilling role. Childcare establishments make a major contribution to the socialization of children by supporting their progressive adaptation to life in the community and their gradual and harmonious adoption of the culture, values, norms and rules of Québec society.

### 1.1.5 Providing support to parents

While recognizing the primary responsibility that parents have in the education of their children, childcare establishments support parents in their role. Accessible all across Québec, these establishments facilitate **the reconciliation of familial and professional responsibilities of parents**.

Childcare establishments also allow more vulnerable parents to get a much needed break and to receive support in their parenting role while providing an excellent opportunity to promote the child's social development when there are no brothers or sisters at home.

### 1.1.6 Facilitating the child's entry into school

By proposing all sorts of stimulations to children, childcare establishments foster the actualization of children's potential by offering them the possibility of acquiring several attitudes or skills that will be useful when they enter school. Self-confidence, the desire to experiment and to express their point of view, a good attention and concentration span, the ability to solve problems, good gross and fine motor skills, the ability to express themselves clearly, and a broad vocabulary are all assets that are likely to ensure that children will be successful when they enter school.

Learning to live in a group, to adopt a routine/schedule and to follow instructions also promotes the subsequent integration of children in a school environment. This is also achieved through reading and writing promotion activities. Finally, educational childcare establishments can facilitate the harmonious integration of young children in schools by establishing privileged ties with the preschool teachers of their neighbourhood or immediate region.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

### 1.2.1 Ensuring children high-quality services

By clearly listing the theoretical foundations, the basic principles that should guide interventions with young children and the various dimensions of their development, the educational program is in itself a good means of ensuring the quality of childcare services. Educators and home childcare providers are thus able to adjust their interventions accordingly. They notably take into account the personal characteristics of the children for whom they are responsible as well as the characteristics of the families and the communities in which the children live and respect the various stages of the educational intervention. While the activities proposed to children may vary from one childcare establishment or group of children to another, the basic principles that guide the choice of these activities must, however, constitute the foundations upon which all interventions are built.

### 1.2.2 Serving as a reference tool for individuals working in a childcare setting

The educational program is first and foremost **intended for educators and home childcare providers**, and aims to support them in the putting in place of conditions that are conducive to the overall development of children and to help them ensure the children's well-being. The program also seeks to orient the establishment of a high-quality interaction between educators or home childcare providers and children.

Although the program is intended first and foremost for personnel who work directly with children, it is also a reference tool for all childcare service personnel. **Pedagogical support staff** in particular should be familiar with and use the program in their support work with educators, home childcare providers and parents. **Managers** will also be able to use the program for supervising educators and home childcare providers as well as for guiding the board of directors in its orientations and budget choices.

Finally, the educational program is a very important tool **for initial training and continuous training** in the childcare field, whether at college, at university or within the community.



### 1.2.3 Fostering consistency between childcare settings

Another goal of the educational program is to promote consistency between all childcare settings. It is for this reason that the program establishes a reference framework for all childcare establishments and suggests to educators and home childcare providers tangible means of implementing the basic principles in their interventions with children.

Finally, by promoting and stimulating reflection and the development of all childcare settings, the educational program contributes to improving the quality of educational interventions with children.

### 1.2.4 Promoting the continuity of all interventions made with young children and families having young children

This program dovetails **with several existing programs** in the health and social services network and in the education network, **notably those intended for vulnerable families.**<sup>9</sup> A good knowledge of the educational program for childcare services on the part of professionals of the various networks, institutions and organizations working with children and families, together with a good knowledge of other existing programs on the part of educators and home childcare providers, allows everyone to better understand the nature of the specific contribution of the various partners to the overall development of young children and to harmonize their interventions accordingly.

The educational program for childcare services is located upstream of, but is also part of a continuum with, the **“Preschool education” section of the Québec Education Program** (chapter 4).<sup>10</sup> The aim of preschool education is to allow 4- and 5-year olds “to develop competencies [...] related to self-knowledge, life in society and communication”. The preschool program also allows children “to begin developing intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication-related competencies [...] and to explore topics of interest to them”, based on games and situations that are real, meaningful and including challenges adapted to the children’s level.

#### To delve into this subject further:

- What objectives does our childcare establishment achieve fully?
- What are the objectives for which there is still room for improvement?
- Who can help us better achieve these objectives?
- Do we have other objectives that are specific to our childcare establishment? If so, which ones?
- What characterizes and distinguishes us from a kindergarten class or a school day care service? What do we offer to children in particular and that is not offered by other establishments?

7. The Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés has published a guide entitled *La santé des enfants... en services de garde éducatifs*, another one entitled *La sécurité des enfants... en services de garde éducatifs* as well as a newsletter called *Bye-bye les microbes!*, intended for educators and home childcare providers (three issues/year).
8. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE LA FAMILLE ET DES AÎNÉS, *Ensemble dans la ronde! Réussir l'intégration des enfants handicapés dans les services de garde à l'enfance*. [Currently being written. Still to be published].
9. We are thinking here of the *Services intégrés en périnatalité et pour la petite enfance à l'intention des familles en contexte de vulnérabilité* (Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2004), the *Plan d'action gouvernemental de promotion des saines habitudes de vie et de prévention des problèmes reliés au poids 2006-2012*, entitled *Investir pour l'avenir* (QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX, 2006), the *Passe-Partout* programs (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1978), *Éveil à la lecture et à l'écriture* (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2002), *Famille, école, communauté: réussir ensemble* (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2002), as well as a few hundred service agreements, both formal and informal, which exist in all regions of Québec between the CSSS (CLSC component) and childcare establishments (see the implementation guide, the framework agreement and the standard protocol of the CLSC-CPE published by the Department in 2002 and which are in the process of being revised).
10. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Quebec Education Program: preschool education, elementary education*, Québec, Le Ministère, 2001, p. 52-68.

## 2 Theoretical foundations of the program

### *In brief*

In order for educational childcare services to play their role fully, they must first be on the cutting edge of knowledge in the field of child development and early childhood education. There are numerous theories on this subject, but this educational program is based on two theories in particular because they are largely recognized and they have proven to be particularly rich in terms both of avenues for interventions with young children in a childcare setting and of research work.

#### **Ecological approach or the importance of the interaction between the child and his or her environment**

According to this approach, a child achieves personal growth and develops thanks to his or her interactions with the physical and human environment. This interaction must therefore be taken into account in all aspects of childcare services, from the layout of the premises to the structuring of activities, the quality of adult-child, child-child and adult-parent interactions.

#### **Attachment theory or the importance of establishing a meaningful relationship between the adult and the child**

According to this theory, the quality of the relationship that is established between the infant, then the child and the first adults who care for the child is the cornerstone of his or her development. Stable and reassuring relationships promote the child's trust and give the child added motivation to explore the world around him or her. Within the context of childcare services, educators and home childcare providers must therefore create conditions that are conducive to the establishment of a meaningful emotional bond with the child.

To welcome children well, to see to their well-being, health and safety, to adequately stimulate their development and to contribute to their socialization, educators and home childcare providers must first understand how a child develops and hence be familiar with a few of the **main theories** in the child development and early childhood care field.

A theory of child development is an explanation of the change that occurs in humans during this period. There are several such theories; they originate from a number of disciplines and are based on various and increasingly sophisticated data collection methods: observation of young children on videocassettes, longitudinal studies of cohorts of children from birth to adulthood, use of brain imagery or various physiological and psychometric readings, etc.

Some theories place greater emphasis on the factors that influence the child's development, on the way in which the progressive organization of his or her nervous system unfolds, on the process of the child's socialization, on the various stages that mark his or her growth or on the critical periods that the child goes through. Several of these theories testify to the importance of the experiences in the first years of life in relation to the subsequent development of the child, the teen and then the adult.

**This educational program is based on two theories in particular**, because they are recognized by everyone, they have given rise to extensive research and they have proven to be particularly rich in terms of avenues for interventions with young children in a childcare setting. These theories or approaches are the **ecological approach**, which emphasizes the interaction between the child and his or her environment, both physical and human, and the **attachment theory**, which is centered on the ties that are established, from birth and even before, between the child and his or her parents or the person who takes care of the child and on the importance of the quality of these initial ties for all subsequent relationships the child will establish.

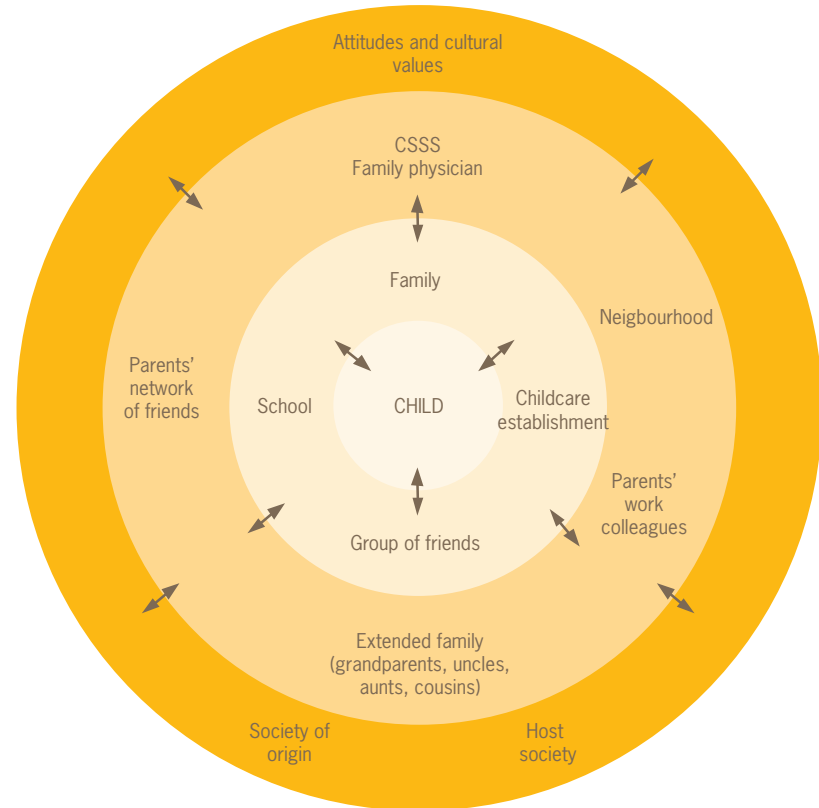
## 2.1 ECOLOGICAL APPROACH OR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CHILD AND HIS OR HER ENVIRONMENT

Several theories consider the child's development as being the result of the interaction between the child's characteristics and those of his or her environment. Some theories place greater emphasis on either one of these poles, whereas other theories mainly stress the reciprocal nature of this influence, i.e. on the fact that children, by their temperament, needs, physical appearance, etc., also influence their environment.

This is notably the case of **the ecological approach**, mainly inspired by the works of Urie Bronfenbrenner.<sup>11</sup> According to this approach, the child's development is influenced by the child's biological characteristics (what is innate to the child), his or her immediate environment, and the broader physical, socioeconomic and cultural context in which the child lives (what is acquired after birth). All of these contexts are closely interrelated and also influence one another.

The variables that play a role in the child's immediate family environment include, for example, the structure and size of the child's family, the climate in the family, the applicable rules of life, and the way in which conflicts and parental responsibilities are managed. In the immediate environment, the decisive factors also include the child's place of residence, the neighbourhood in which the child grows up, the network of friends and the workplace of the child's parents, the childcare establishment and the school which the child attends. The background or backdrop to the child's development includes the behaviours that are deemed socially acceptable by everyone in the society in which the child lives and the expectations that society has of the child.

Figure 1. Ecological model



Adapted from R. CLOUTIER et al., *Psychologie de l'enfant*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2004, p. 18.



For example, research in neuroscience has shown that by stimulating the various senses of a newborn baby, the development of its nervous system and the functioning of its brain are directly influenced.<sup>12</sup> Other research has revealed **critical periods** in the child's development, namely periods when his or her brain offers a maximum potential for acquiring new skills, notably language skills, and beyond which the acquisition of a given skill could perhaps prove to be more difficult.<sup>13</sup>

Still other research has shown that certain situations are likely to compromise a child's harmonious development. Examples include the presence of a disability, a chronic disease or the fact that the child was abused or neglected for instance, a low level of schooling or the presence of a mental illness in one of the child's parents, growing up in an under-privileged setting or attending a lower quality childcare establishment. These situations are known as **risk factors** in the child's development.

However, other elements or situations act as supports for the child's development. They are reference points that are likely to offset the negative effects of risk factors or at the very least to attenuate such factors. These elements or situations are known as **protection factors**. A child can grow up in an environment characterized by neglect, for example, but find in the parents of his or her friends, at the childcare establishment or at school, individuals with whom he or she can develop stable, reassuring and higher quality relationships.

Almost every child is one day exposed to one or more risk factors during his or her development. The important thing is that the child be able to also rely on protection factors so that he or she acquires a solid **resilience**, namely the **ability to maintain or re-establish his or her equilibrium when the child experiences a difficulty or a situation that threatens his or her development**.<sup>14</sup> The childcare establishment which the child attends, through the quality of the interventions of the adults working there and the activities in which the child is able to participate, must be clearly situated on the side of the protection factors in the child's development.



## 2.2 ATTACHMENT THEORY OR THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ADULT AND THE CHILD

The attachment theory, associated mainly, but not exclusively, with the works of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, is considered to be one of the most important acquisitions of 20<sup>th</sup> century psychology and still today is the subject of extensive research in several countries. According to this theory, a newborn is very vulnerable. The baby depends entirely on the people around it to meet its needs and requires the attentive presence of a familiar person, generally its mother or father, to acquire the emotional security that will allow it to develop.

The day-to-day relationship with a reassuring parental figure helps the child feel at ease and calm. When a young child is anxious, he or she will instinctively look for the presence of an adult who can calm his or her fears. The child gradually forms an attachment to that person. An infant will feel secure if, when he or she calls, this person responds within a reasonable time period to this call, recognizes the need and provides the care that the infant requires.<sup>15</sup> This person then becomes **a first attachment figure**, and the relationship that gradually develops between the child and this person will be the cornerstone of the child's subsequent emotional development.<sup>16</sup>

On the strength of this first relationship, the child will go on to establish relationships with other persons, such as other members of his or her immediate family, grandparents, educators or home childcare providers, for example. These other relationships are not formed to the detriment of the first relationship, but rather complement it. **The attachment is thus a lasting emotional bond that results from regular and frequent interactions between the child and a few persons around him or her.** In order for such bonds to form, the childcare establishment must, however, offer conducive conditions, notably a stability and continuity in the personnel that takes care of each child as well as routines and rituals as the day unfolds. The child will thus perceive the situations that occur as being foreseeable, and the relationship that is established between the adult and the child as being a point of reference in those situations that will eventually appear difficult or threatening to him or her.

The entry into a childcare establishment often represents **a first separation for the child and his or her parents**. This situation thus represents a challenge for them. For the child, the challenge lies in managing to retain the feeling of his or her own identity while at the childcare establishment.<sup>17</sup> For parents, the challenge is to put their trust in the educator or the home childcare provider, and later to accept that an attachment relationship will form between their child and this other adult to whom they have entrusted their child during their absence. To help parents have a positive experience in relation to this separation, this other adult must, on the one hand, seek to establish a reassuring relationship with the child and, on the other hand, endeavour to gain the trust of the parents.

18-36  
MONTHS

During the summer, the parents of Amy, a 2-year-old, talked to her about the childcare establishment and all the fun that she would soon have there. Then one day, they took Amy to meet Chantal, her future educator. But on the first day that Amy's parents bring her to the childcare establishment, she starts to cry when she sees her parents about to leave. Chantal suggests that the parents remain until snack time in order to give Amy the chance to calm down and to begin taking part in the activities. She is already playing with other children just a few steps away from her parents. During the week, Amy's parents will gradually shorten their stay at the childcare establishment until their daughter feels at ease. That way, Amy will feel more confident that her parents will come back and pick her up at the end of the day, and she will be able to let her parents leave without fear of abandonment.

It is important that the educator or the home childcare provider talk positively to the child about his or her parents during the day, show the child their photo, relate an experience with them, remind the child that mom or dad will be back at the end of the day, or allow the child to use a toy or an object brought from home at the childcare establishment, particularly in the case of infants and toddlers. The more the child realizes that his or her parents trust this person, the more the child will develop a relationship of confidence with the person, while having the feeling of remaining loyal to the love of his or her parents.

Moreover, when the person in charge talks about a child to his or her parents, the person should make a point of conveying a positive image of the child. For example, the skills that the child has acquired and the challenges that he or she has taken up during the day should be emphasized. Once a relationship of trust exists, parents are more open to talk about the positive aspects of their child's development, but also about the difficulties that he or she may occasionally encounter at the childcare establishment. Establishing a relationship of trust allows parents and educators or home childcare providers to appreciate one another, to recognize their respective responsibilities and to lend one another support.

According to researchers, two out of three children establish **reassuring attachment relationships** with the adults who take care of them, whereas the remaining children establish **avoidant** (20%), **ambivalent** (10-15%) or **disorganized** (5-10%) relationships. The quality of the attachment relationships forged between the child and his or her parents – and later between the child and his or her educator or home childcare provider – will vary notably according to the child's temperament and the sensitivity of the adult who cares for him or her, namely the adult's capacity to correctly interpret the child's signals and to determine the degree of stimulation that the child should be offered. This quality may also vary according to the child's individual characteristics, to less favourable living circumstances or to specific cultural traits.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, some authors consider the attachment relationship as being a sort of emotional dance that unfolds between the adult and the child and that varies according to the temperament of the adult and that of the child.<sup>19</sup> One must not, however, lose sight of the fact that **adult-child relationships are but one of the “emotional systems” that contribute to the child's development** and that child-child relationships complement, and occasionally compensate for, certain shortcomings experienced within the “adult-child emotional system”.

#### To delve into this subject further:

- How do the interactions between children and their environment influence their development? Examples?
- Do we ever modify an element of the environment and then see its impact on the development of one or more children in the group? Examples?
- What do we do in our childcare establishment to ensure that solid attachment relationships can form between each child and the educator or home childcare provider?
- What more could we do to improve this aspect?

11. U. BRONFENBRENNER, *The Ecology of Human Development*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979, 348 p., and “*Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives*”, *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 22, n° 6, 1986, p. 723-742.
12. G. DOHERTY, *Zero to Six: The Basis for School Readiness*, Gatineau, Human Resources Development Canada, [On-line], 1997, 120 p. [<http://www.rhdsc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/publications/1997-002557/page00.shtml>] (Consulted on February 3, 2006).
13. N.M. McCAIN et J.F. MUSTARD, *The Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain: final report*, Toronto (ON), The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, 1999, 177 p. Also see J.T. BRUER, *Tout est-il joué avant trois ans?*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2002, 301 p.
14. B. CYRULNIK, *Un merveilleux malheur*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1999, 218 p.
15. M.D.S. AINSWORTH, “L'attachement mère-enfant”, *Enfance*, n°s 1-2, , January-March 1983, p. 7-18, and J. BOWLBY, *Attachment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York (NY), Basic Books, 1982, 425 p. (Attachment and Loss Series, vol. 1).
16. C. HOWES and C. HAMILTON, “*Children's Relationships with Child Care Teachers: Stability and Concordance With Parental Attachment*”, *Child Development*, n° 63, 1992, p. 467-478.
17. F. TOCHON and J.-M. MIRON, *La recherche-intervention éducative: transition entre famille et CPE*, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2004, p. 21.
18. To learn more about the parent-child attachment relationship and how to support it, readers can consult the *Guide pour soutenir le développement de l'attachement sécurisant de la grossesse à un an* published in 2005 by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec. They can also consult the volume of J. CASSIDY and P.R. SHAVER (Ed.), *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications*, New York (NY), The Guilford Press, 1999.
19. F. SINCLAIR and J. NAUD, *EcoCPE: Programme de valorisation du développement du jeune enfant dans le cadre de la vie en milieux éducatifs préscolaires*, Montréal, Chenelière/McGraw-Hill, 2003, 264 p.

### 3 Basic principles of the program

#### *In brief*

The five basic principles of the educational program ensue from the theoretical foundations presented in the previous chapter. The first four principles are related to the child, whereas the fifth principle deals with the three-party relationship between the child, his or her parents and the adult who is responsible for the child at the childcare establishment. All of these principles apply on a day-to-day basis in the various educational childcare settings.

#### **Each child is unique**

By developing an in-depth knowledge of each child, the adult who is responsible for the children is able to recognize and to respect each child's characteristics, pace of development, needs and fields of interest.

#### **Children are the primary agents of their development**

A child first learns spontaneously by experimenting, observing, imitating and talking with others thanks to this child's own motivation and natural aptitudes. The adult guides and supports this process which leads to autonomy.

#### **Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process**

Development affects all dimensions of a child's being: emotional, physical and motor, social and moral, cognitive and language. These dimensions come into play to various degrees within the context of the child's learning experiences. The interventions of the adult, the layouts/arrangements and the activities proposed in childcare establishments call on all of these dimensions in multiple ways.

#### **Children learn through play**

Basically the product of internal motivation, play is a means of choice for the child to explore the world and experiment. The various types of play activities in which the child engages – on his or her own or with others, motor, symbolic, etc. – call on, each in their own way, all of the child's dimensions.

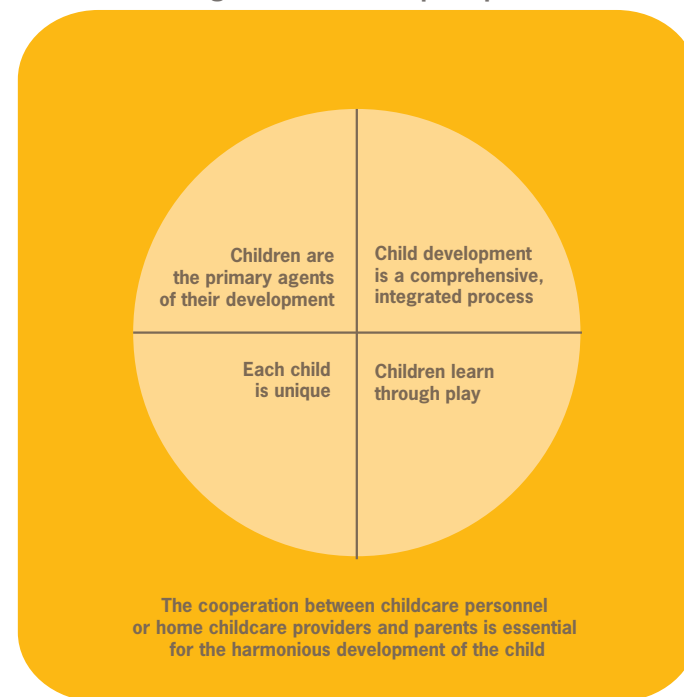
#### **Cooperation between childcare personnel or home childcare providers and parents is essential for the harmonious development of the child**

It is important that a good understanding and a relationship of trust exist between educators or home childcare providers and parents. This reassures the child and fosters the creation of a privileged emotional bond between the child and the adult(s) who takes (take) care of the child at the childcare establishment.

The theories of child development mentioned in the previous chapter have given rise to various early childhood education models or approaches. However, these approaches are not sharply defined. Indeed, they have been greatly influenced by one another. It is not necessary to know all of them, but the important thing to bear in mind is that each approach, in its own way, can help childcare personnel and home childcare providers better meet the child's needs and that none of these approaches has a monopoly over truth or success.<sup>20</sup>

However, whatever the approach favoured by the childcare establishment, **five elements**, common to several of these approaches, **are considered** by the Department **as being basic principles** that should guide childcare personnel and home childcare providers in their day-to-day interventions with children and their family.

Figure 2. Five basic principles



### 3.1 EACH CHILD IS UNIQUE

While children develop most of their abilities according to pre-established sequences, each child develops in his or her own way and has an individual rate of development. Each child, whether girl or boy, has specific characteristics. Some of these characteristics are attributable to hereditary or genetic factors (gender, size, skin colour, temperament, etc.), whereas others ensue from environment-related factors (economic, cultural, educational, social or other conditions). **The combination of hereditary or genetic factors and environmental factors makes each child a basically unique being.** German educator Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852) was the first to emphasize the importance of recognizing the uniqueness of each child, and several early childhood education approaches have since emphasized this aspect.

To apply this principle in their interventions, educators or home childcare providers seek to understand the reality of each child entrusted to them, to respect the child's differences and individual characteristics and do not always try to have everyone do the same things at the same time.

18-36  
MONTHS

Nick, who is 20 months of age, makes extensive use of language in his interactions with the other children and learns new words easily, whereas Philip, who is of the same age, devotes all his energy to moving about in the room and, for the time being, shows little interest in acquiring language skills. The educator or the home childcare provider who recognizes the uniqueness of each child will propose to each one activities adapted to his or her level of development without being concerned about these purely individual differences.

Regular communication with the parents and daily observation of children are key tools for understanding what makes each child unique. Recognizing and respecting the differences and characteristics of each individual facilitates the child's adaptation to the childcare establishment. Individualized gestures also reinforce the privileged emotional relationship that the child develops with the adult who cares for him or her.

By acquiring a good knowledge of each child, by knowing how to identify the child's strengths and weaknesses and by respecting the child's pace, the adult accompanies the child more effectively. The adult can then put at the child's disposal materials likely to arouse his or her curiosity and interest, and provide the child with opportunities to experiment, develop and grow.

0-18  
MONTHS

18-36  
MONTHS

In her family, Sara is accustomed to outward demonstrations of affection. She looks for a privileged contact with the educator upon arriving at the childcare establishment in the morning, whereas Tony prefers to head straight for the toys, barely taking the time to say hello. The educator thus organizes the morning's activities in such a way as to respond in an individualized manner to the emotional needs of the children in the group.

**Children having special needs** also need to play, find self-fulfillment, learn to live in a group and develop all sorts of abilities. While the premises, the materials or the adult's intervention must occasionally be adapted according to their limitations (children with an impairment), these children are like every other child and all they want to do is to have fun, grow, explore their environment and learn to master it.

18-36  
MONTHS

B

No one is surprised that little Tommy prefers to crawl rather than to jump as he makes his way through the course. Enthusiastic, the group encourages Tommy to keep going!

3-5  
MONTHS

B

With the help of a speech therapist from the CSSS, the educator prepares a picture book to facilitate communication with Suzie, who is 3 years old and has delayed language development. To the educator's great surprise, the picture book serves just as much to stimulate the language development of Lucas, even though he is not behind at this level.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 CHILDREN ARE THE PRIMARY AGENTS OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT

The majority of learning by a child results from a natural aptitude and an intrinsic motivation to develop. Consequently, it is not necessary to impose this learning from the outside. However, this aptitude and this motivation should be supported and encouraged by the adult. Throughout the day, children interact with their physical and social environment, and it is through these interactions that they develop at all levels, according to their temperament, but also through the physical, sensorial, emotional and social stimulations they receive.

A child learns by exploring, interacting, observing, imitating and listening: the child's thoughts are structured on the basis of what the child sees, hears, touches or feels and on the basis of the relationships that the child has with the adults and the children around him or her. This is **active learning**: it is by acting that the child learns about him or herself, about others and about his or her environment. Engaging in a gesture, an action or an activity, with help at first, then without, enables a child to develop self-confidence and autonomy. Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi (1796-1827) followed by English educator Robert Owen (1771-1858) were the first to emphasize the importance for children of learning things on their own rather than by acting under the direction of an adult.<sup>22</sup>

Children discover the properties of objects by manipulating them and progressively adjust their understanding of the world by experimenting, observing and communicating with others. Growing up and developing are **basically an active process**, with the child being the chief architect. The role of the adult is to allow, facilitate, supervise, guide, coach and support the child on this road to autonomy.

It was on the basis of this principle that the so-called “active learning” (High Scope) approach was developed in 1962 by David Weikart to respond first and foremost to the needs of children from underprivileged neighbourhoods of Michigan. However, it has evolved a great deal since then, as comparative research or longitudinal studies have made it possible to isolate those elements that have contributed to its success, with the end result that this approach is now successfully applied in all settings.

According to this approach, **learning is** first and foremost **a social experience**, namely one that involves highly meaningful interactions between children and adults and among children. It is referred to as “active learning” because it presupposes that **the child learns in action**, that it is through the experience with various objects that the child builds his or her knowledge. This approach is based on the personal initiative of the child, which leads him or her to have direct and immediate experiences with reality and to reflect on these experiences. Hence, it comprises both physical activity **and** mental activity.

Children undertake actions or activities based on their fields of interest; they choose the materials and decide on the use, explore these materials with all their senses, transform and combine the materials in their own way, and talk to one another about their experiences. Meanwhile, educators or home childcare providers support children. They do not tell children what to do or how to do it, but let them take responsibility for their learning, observe them and interact with them. The role of educators or home childcare providers is to make varied and stimulating materials available to children and to give them time and space so that they can engage in all sorts of activities. This role also entails giving children the opportunity to make choices and helping them to look back on their activities.<sup>23</sup>

Under the approach that fosters active learning, educators or home childcare providers create an environment that is conducive to the emergence of certain experiences, known as **key experiences** because all children, whatever their culture of origin, have these experiences and repeat them in different contexts and over long periods. The fruit of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, the wording of their description is constantly evolving, but these experiences are grouped into the following categories: creative representation and imagination, language development and the literacy process, self-esteem and personal relations, movement, music, classification, seriation, numbers, space and time.<sup>24</sup> Active learning and democratic intervention, which will be described later (in section 5.5), are closely related concepts.



### 3.3 CHILD DEVELOPMENT IS A COMPREHENSIVE, INTEGRATED PROCESS

Child development comprises **several dimensions**: emotional, physical, motor, social, moral, cognitive and language. These dimensions influence one another and are all **interrelated**, even though each one does not necessarily evolve at the same pace. The development of one dimension necessarily calls on the others and exerts a domino effect on child development as a whole.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS

Simon is playing at moving various objects with his friends. This activity calls on his motor skills when manipulating the objects and coordinating his gestures. But he is also interacting with other children and consequently, he is learning how to share materials and space with others (social dimension) and he feels, then expresses his joy or frustration (emotional dimension). He utters vocal sounds or tells the others what he wants to do or he comments on the effects of his actions (language dimension). Finally, he explores the properties of the objects which he is manipulating by comparing them (bigger, smaller, heavier, lighter) or by categorizing them by colour or shape (cognitive dimension).

It was a Belgian physician, Ovide Decroly (1871-1932), then an American, John Dewey (1859-1952), who best illustrated this aspect of child development. Ideally, the goal of each activity proposed to the child is to reach not only any given one of these dimensions, but also the interrelation that exists between them. The space will also be laid out in such a way as to allow the child to explore freely and safely a large diversity of materials and consequently, to develop at all levels.

The important thing is to **emphasize** the process rather than the product, namely **the exploration itself** rather than the child's achievements or the acquisition of specific abilities or skills. What is above all important is that the child develops his or her ability to interact constructively and in an ever more diversified manner with his or her environment.

Educators or home childcare providers thus play a **mediation role** between the child and the universe around him or her, namely one which consists of giving meaning to what the child sees, hears, does or sees others do. This role also entails making sure that each child feels lovable and capable in whatever he or she does. The importance of aiming for the development of the whole child in the approach favoured by the adult will be examined in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5.



### 3.4 CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY

One of the main characteristics of play is the pleasure that children derive from it. Play is an excellent way to explore the world, understand, imagine, modify and master it. As such, play must be considered **the main tool whereby children express themselves, learn and develop**. Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) asserted that early childhood education should be fun and be geared to play activities, and a large number of early childhood educational approaches have since emphasized this aspect.

In the life of a child, **play** has several functions. First, it allows children to make numerous sensorial discoveries and to perfect their motor skills, then later, to act on their environment by manipulating it as they see fit, and also to experiment with new social roles. Play allows children to make choices which, in turn, leads them to develop their autonomy, creativity and self-esteem. It also serves to help them confront their fears and overcome the monsters that inhabit their imagination. Finally, play is an outlet allowing children to dissipate their tensions and vent their frustrations.<sup>25</sup>

Various authors have grouped children's games into different categories. Piaget, for example, distinguishes four categories: **games of exercise**, symbolic games, games that involve rules and construction games. Games of exercise are the first games that infants, toddlers and preschool-age children play. These games are so named because they consist of repeating the same action or activity several times.

0-18  
MONTHS

Mary-Ann, who is 6 months old, enjoys shaking a rattle and producing sounds. In so doing, she is learning that the repetition of the same action produces the same effect. This is a game of exercise, made up of simple and isolated gestures which become increasingly complex as the infant acquires better coordination.

18-36  
MONTHS

Sasha, who is 2 years old, does the same puzzle over and over. In so doing, he gradually develops his fine motor skills and his coordination, increases his speed of execution and improves his mental representation of forms.

3-5  
YEARS

Rope skipping and ball games are more sophisticated repetitive games of the motor and sensorial types which Meredith, Gregory and Bart, who are 3, 4 and 5 years old respectively, enjoy playing whenever they have the chance.



**Symbolic games**, for their part, consist of role-playing. They are very present among children from 2 to about 7 years of age and are used to express reality as children see and above all perceive it (playing that they are mom, at the store, at the doctor's office). **Games with rules** are played in a group and require that those children who play them abide by certain rules (playing hide-and-seek, with marbles, various parlour games). Finally, **construction games** comprise all the games that consist of assembling objects or materials of various shapes, substances or colours (puzzle, building blocks, collages).

Other authors have also described how play can take several forms according to the nature and scope of participation of the children: these authors distinguish **solitary games, parallel games, associative games** and **cooperative games**. While children 2 years of age and under generally play mostly parallel games, and those 3 years of age and over generally play associative games, each child may, occasionally, return to games that characterized his or her earlier stages of development.

Several studies have shown the existence of links between the quality of children's games, in particular symbolic games, and the various aspects of their cognitive, language, social and moral development. Educators or home childcare providers who wish to make an educational contribution to the development of children must first **provide a context** (space, time) **favourable to play**. They can also get involved in the game to allow children to continue it in a different way, to explore other variants or to make the game more complex, thus giving children the opportunity to learn other things.<sup>26</sup>

More and more parents are asking educators or home childcare providers to teach their children how to swim, dance or skate, use a computer or speak a second language. In their concern for ensuring the harmonious development of children, educators or home childcare providers must remind these parents of **the importance of aiming for the overall development** of their children, namely in all their dimensions, **including the one that involves using play**, fantasy and creativity to help children learn.

### 3.5 COOPERATION BETWEEN CHILDCARE PERSONNEL OR HOME CHILDCARE PROVIDERS AND PARENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Parents play a major role in the development of their child. Not only are they the child's first attachment figures, first models and first educators, they will also accompany the child throughout his or her life. When the child enters the childcare establishment, the **conversations with his or her parents allow** the educators or the home childcare providers **to know** and to grasp **the child's family reality** as well as the child's characteristics: preferences, fields of interest, habits. These conversations also provide insight into the values and customs of the family which will facilitate the educator's or home childcare provider's understanding of the child's behaviour in a childcare setting. Such discussions also allow parents to find out the nature of the services that will be offered to their child, the educational program of the childcare centre, day care centre or home childcare operation, the type of approach advocated in the interaction with children as well as the values that are favoured in the establishment or centre.

But a cooperative relationship is more than the mere exchanging of information. It implies that the parents will feel welcome when they wish to communicate with the adult to whom they are entrusting their child, that they will feel at ease asking questions, voicing their opinion, and expressing their needs and expectations regarding the care to be given to their child. It also presupposes that the parents will clearly see that all of the persons in the childcare establishment want to work together to promote the well-being and harmonious development of their child.

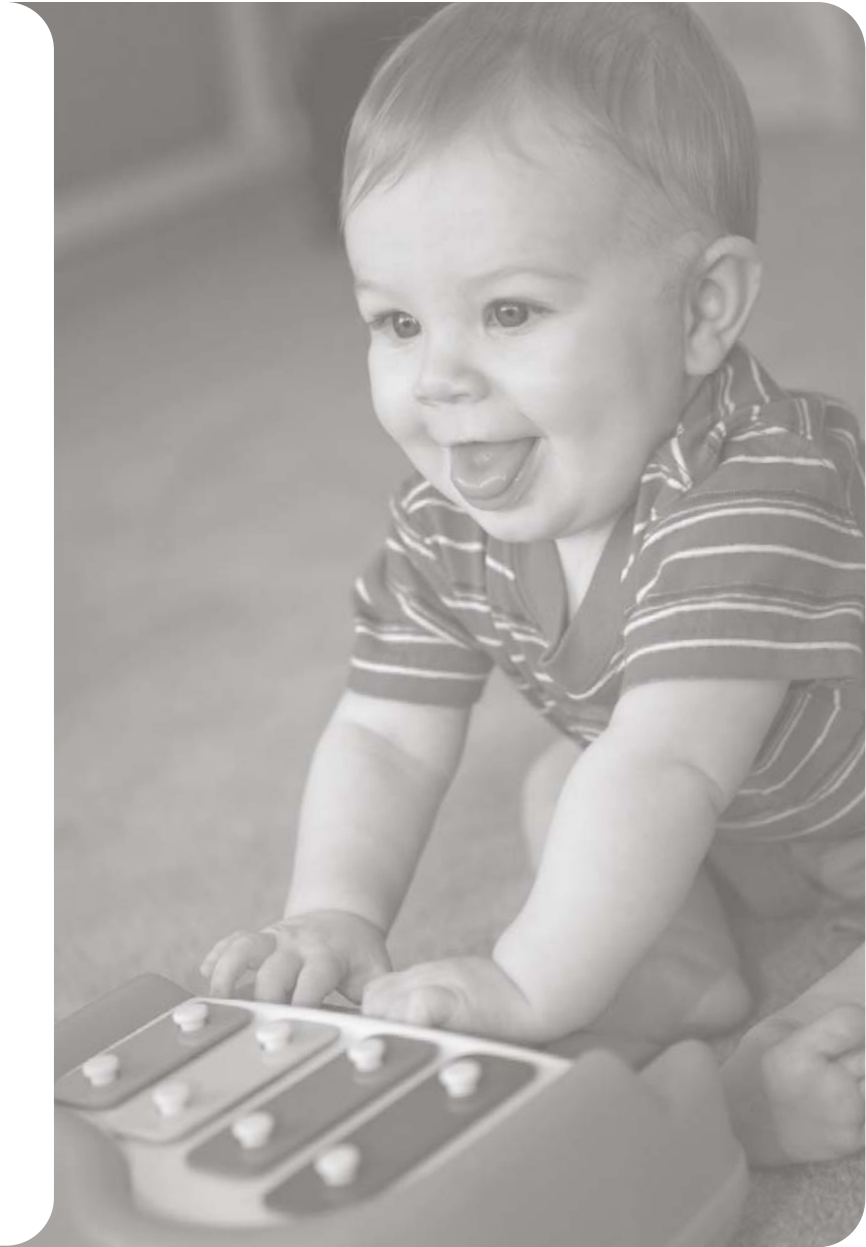
Such a relationship allows parents and educators or home childcare providers to adapt their interventions according to the evolution of the child both at home and at the childcare establishment. Should the parents and educators or the home childcare provider experience difficulties with a child, for example, it will be in their best interest to talk openly about it in order to come up with common intervention strategies and to ensure the consistency of their actions. These discussions will allow parents and the educator or the home childcare provider to support one another in the carrying out of their respective responsibilities.<sup>27</sup>

Research has shown that such a partnership between parents and educators or home childcare providers has numerous beneficial effects, be it for children, parents or personnel. There may even be long-term spin-offs, for example on the quality of the relations that the parents will have later with school staff, which in turn will facilitate their child's success at school.<sup>28</sup>

**To delve into this subject further:**

- How are each of these principles tangibly applied in our childcare establishment? (Give examples.)
- Do they all have the same importance for us?
- Does one of them appear to be more difficult to apply than the others? If so, which one? For what reason?
- Who or what could help us integrate this principle more in our interventions?

20. For more details concerning these different approaches, see M. LALONDE-GRATON, *Fondements et pratiques de l'éducation à la petite enfance*, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2003, 225 p.
21. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE LA FAMILLE ET DES AÎNÉS, *Ensemble dans la ronde! Réussir l'intégration des enfants handicapés dans les services de garde à l'enfance*, op. cit. [currently being written. Still to be published].
22. M. LALONDE-GRATON, op. cit., p. 10.
23. M. HOHMANN et al., *Partager le plaisir d'apprendre: guide d'intervention éducative au préscolaire*, translation of *Educating Young Children*, Montréal, Gaétan Morin, 2000, p. 12-31.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 266-267.
25. L. VYGOTSKY, "Play and its Role in the Mental Development of Children", in J.S. BRUNER (ed.), *Play: Its Role in Development and Evolution*, New York (NY), Basic Books, 1976.
26. L.E. BERK and A. WINSLER, *Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education*, Washington (DC), National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995.
27. M. HOHMANN et al., op. cit., p. 63-78.
28. S. COUTU et al., "La collaboration famille-milieu de garde: ce que nous apprend la recherche", *Éducation et francophonie*, vol. XXXIII, n° 2, 2005, p. 85-111.



# 4

## Development of the Whole Child

### *In brief*

Child development is a comprehensive process that calls on several dimensions. However, each dimension comes into play to varying degrees, according to what the child is learning and the activities in which he or she is engaging.

#### **Emotional dimension**

The satisfaction of the child's emotional needs is just as vital as that of his or her physical needs. Thus it is of the highest importance to create a stable and reassuring emotional relationship with the child from the very first day in the childcare establishment, for it is on the basis of this relationship that the child will be able to develop harmoniously.

#### **Physical and motor dimension**

This dimension refers to the child's physiological, physical, sensorial and motor needs. The development of the child's motor skills (agility, endurance, balance, lateralization, etc.) includes gross motor skills (sitting down, crawling, walking, running, climbing, grasping an object...) and fine motor skills (drawing, stringing pearls, cutting...). Offering children the possibility to move about in the childcare establishment promotes their physical and motor development while leading them to acquire a healthy lifestyle and prevents obesity.

#### **Social and moral dimension**

The childcare environment offers children the opportunity to learn how to relate to others, to express and control their emotions, to put themselves in the place of others and to resolve problems. The acquisition of social skills and the emergence of the awareness of what is good or bad allow children to maintain increasingly harmonious relations with people around them and to take into account the perspective of others prior to acting.

#### **Cognitive dimension**

A stimulating environment allows children to develop their senses, acquire new knowledge and skills, and increasingly understand the world around them. Educators and home childcare providers will support children at this level by promoting reflection, reasoning and creativity.

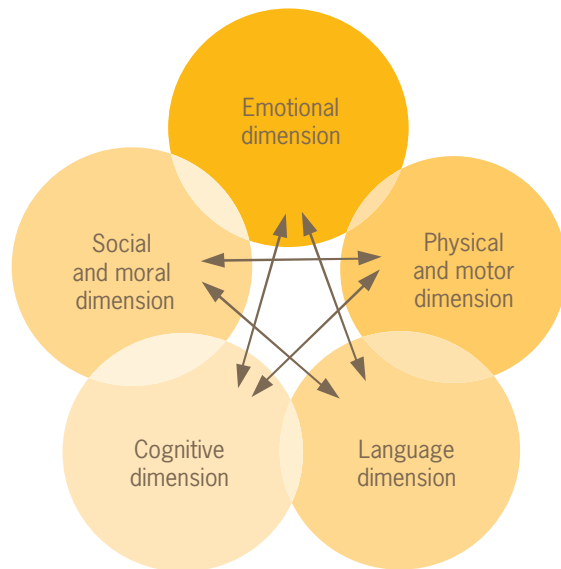
#### **Language dimension**

The development of language and symbolic representation is reinforced by life in a group. Educators contribute to the children's development at this level by talking to them and by helping them better express their needs and emotions, ask questions, and improve their pronunciation and vocabulary.

Aiming for the **development of the whole child** means giving the child the opportunity to develop at all levels: emotional, physical and motor, social and moral, cognitive and language.<sup>29</sup> It entails placing equal importance on each dimension and recognizing that these dimensions are closely interrelated. While many researchers have shown that this development follows a relatively foreseeable order or sequence, it is also known that this development is not linear, namely that it sometimes takes place at a faster pace, at a slower pace or follows a saw-tooth pattern. New situations or difficulties, whether major or minor, can even sometimes lead to regressions in this development.

Educators or home childcare providers wishing to adequately accompany children in their development will find pleasure in stimulating them, but without trying to overly hasten this development, as children will soon enough be exposed to the pressure to perform.

**Figure 3. Development of the whole child**



#### 4.1 EMOTIONAL DIMENSION

All human beings must first meet their physiological needs (drinking, eating, moving about, eliminating body wastes, sleeping) to survive, and children are no exception to this rule. However, it is just as vital to meet the child's **need for security**. If this need is not met from the outset, the child will experience difficulties developing at other levels, exploring his or her environment, trusting him or herself, acquiring good self-esteem. That is why it is essential that a privileged relationship be forged between the educator or home childcare provider and each child for whom he or she is responsible. This is all the more important when the child is young (infant or toddler) or when the child lives in a context characterized by vulnerability.

Whereas in the case of home childcare operations, the stability of the adult who takes care of the child is automatically assured, this is not always the case in childcare centres or day care centres. Ideally, here too **each child should have an assigned educator**, namely a person with whom he or she spends most of the day. That way, day after day, the child is sure to find this known and reassuring figure, and will be able to anticipate that this person will adequately meet his or her needs. The management of the childcare establishment should also be designed in such a way that occasional or regular replacements are made, wherever possible, using the same person, in particular with younger children or those who demonstrate greater insecurity.<sup>30</sup>

An adult will establish a relationship of trust with the child by quickly responding whenever the child feels unsettled, is sick or in distress. The development of routines and foreseeable responses will also reassure the child and help him or her develop a **relationship of trust**. The adult in charge will also see to creating a safe environment where the child can explore as he or she pleases. Finally, the adult will demonstrate his or her interest in the child and make the child feel important.

The person in charge also allows the child to develop his or her **ability to express him or herself and to control his or her emotions**, for example by giving words to these emotions (e.g.: “It looks like you are proud of yourself”, “I think that you are angry”) and by showing the child effective and constructive ways of expressing these emotions in a manner that is safe and respectful of others. The adult also helps the child to develop his or her **ability to manage changes and transitions**, whether these occur in the child’s family environment (move, arrival of a brother or sister, etc.) or in the childcare environment (change of group, of room, of educator, entering school), by introducing these changes progressively if possible, by emphasizing their positive aspect, by encouraging the other children to show their empathy and to give support to the child in question, by allowing the child to feel sad or angry occasionally or by temporarily modifying his or her expectations concerning the child, for example.

Educators or home childcare providers who want to help children develop at the emotional level will also help them **develop and reinforce their self-esteem**. To enable children to discover who they are and how each of them is unique and different from others, the person in charge offers varied activities and gives children the opportunity to make choices and to use their strengths. He or she congratulates children when they succeed, posts their work and encourages them to talk about the experiences that they have outside the childcare establishment. Finally, the educator or home childcare provider offers his or her **support to children who are shy** by giving them responsibilities, allowing them to experience success or placing them with the same playmates as often as possible, to help them make friends.<sup>31</sup>

This person also has a role to play in the **development of the child’s personal and gender identity**. He or she helps children to know that they are boys or girls and to be proud of it. The educator or home childcare provider places equal value on both genders and takes advantage of a sexist action or remark made by children to have them reflect on the question and to **adhere to the values of equality embraced by Québec society**.<sup>32</sup>

While the person in charge cannot prevent children from experiencing occasional unpleasant or distressing situations, he or she can help them develop their **resilience**, to put the problems that they are experiencing into words and to find satisfactory solutions to them.<sup>33</sup> Through the quality of his or her interventions, this person can then be a protection factor in the child’s development.

## 4.2 PHYSICAL AND MOTOR DIMENSION

To develop this aspect, the educational childcare establishment begins by stimulating the **sensory perception** of the infant, then the toddler, by putting the child in contact with colours and shapes, sounds, smells, flavours and textures. The child also develops his or her kinesthetic awareness (e.g.: awareness of laying down, sitting or standing), perceptual organization, as well as eye-hand coordination.

During early childhood and with the support of kind adults, children also acquire various **motor skills**, in a predetermined sequence, but always at their own pace. They develop their mobility (turning over, crawling, sitting, standing up), their gross motor skills (raising their head, picking up or offering an object, walking, climbing, running, manipulating big objects) and their fine motor skills (picking up or catching small objects, stringing pearls, cutting paper, painting, drawing). Children also develop their **lateralization**, a process which consists of going from an undifferentiated use of either side of their body to a differentiation, then to the establishment of a dominance of one side of their body over the other. This dominance assures children greater efficiency in their movements and will help them accomplish school-related tasks, such as writing.

In time, children also become increasingly **autonomous** in their ability to satisfy their primary physical needs: eating, getting dressed or going to the bathroom alone. These situations represent privileged moments for the children to acquire a healthy lifestyle, notably at the hygiene level (washing their hands and brushing their teeth) and at the dietary level (developing their taste for varied and healthy food). It is also through their sensory experiences that boys and girls acquire the mental representation of their body and learn to situate themselves in space. The acquisition of what is called their **body schema** will allow children to establish the boundaries of their body and better know its limitations.

A childcare environment rich in stimuli also allows children to exercise their sensory and motor perceptions and to organize them. The acquisition of skills such as listening attentively, holding a pencil, recognizing their right side from their left, the top from the bottom, classifying and categorizing objects in series, recognizing the smallest, the biggest, the longest, the thinnest, etc. contributes to developing children’s self-confidence, self-esteem and identity. Moreover, these skills are **prerequisites for school learning activities**, such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

**Activity and play periods** are necessary for children's development, just as are **rest and relaxation periods**. Indeed, the latter allow children to rest from the accumulated fatigue and from the ambient noise that is characteristic of childcare establishments and to preserve their listening abilities. Sleep plays a fundamental role in the physical and mental development of children, notably by allowing them to consolidate what they have learned. Hence, it is important that educators and home childcare providers respect the rhythm of activity and sleep of children, particularly among infants.

Children also need to engage in high-energy-output activities such as running, climbing, jumping. These activities allow toddlers and preschool children not only to take up challenges, but also to **channel their energy**. Moving about, running and climbing also predispose children to carry out calmer tasks or activities requiring application and concentration, such as listening to a tale, doing a puzzle or inventing role-plays.<sup>34</sup> These activities also help to **reduce tensions**, agitation and aggressive behaviour in young children, in addition to developing their physical agility and endurance. Finally, allowing children to move about and run each day, both indoors and outdoors, contributes to good physical and mental health, and helps prevent obesity.<sup>35</sup>

### 4.3 SOCIAL AND MORAL DIMENSION

The social dimension is the ability to maintain flexible and harmonious relations with others in different contexts. Stimulating the social development of children in a childcare establishment means helping children to develop their **ability** to trust others and **to get along well with their peers**. The presence of other children and, above all, the frequent contact with them create an environment that is conducive to the establishment of egalitarian relations. As the size of families becomes ever smaller, group life in a childcare establishment replaces the interactions with the many brothers and sisters that today's children no longer have and allows them to acquire skills that once were acquired at home.<sup>36</sup>

However, bringing children together in the same place is not enough to ensure their socialization. Children must be supported in this learning about life in a group by adults who help children use words to describe what they are feeling (instead of expressing their anxiety or uneasiness by yelling or punching), who promote the discovery of, respect for and acceptance of differences and who know how to guide children in the management of stress, conflicts and challenges that life in a group occasionally entails.

Peers also contribute to the child's social development by acting as **models**. The child's interest in peers also depends on the child's age. At birth, infants are fairly indifferent to other children, but starting at the age of 6 months they begin to relate to these children, even if initially these contacts are still limited and at times clumsy. Between one and two years of age, a child will mainly relate to his or her peers by way of the objects that the child offers, takes or wishes to take. Imitation then becomes the main method of relating to other children. Gradually the child is able to relate to his or her peers more interactively and to develop his or her first friendships, above all with other children of the same gender.<sup>37</sup>



It is also during this period that living in a group contributes to the emergence of empathy which gradually leads the child to **cooperate, share** and **make compromises**. At the childcare establishment, boys and girls learn that all of their wishes, as well as those of their playmates, cannot always be fulfilled. They learn that living in a group entails rules, including for example those of respecting others, taking other persons' needs into consideration and **waiting for their turn**. In a multi-age group, children may be called upon to **take care of a smaller or younger child**, to protect this child or to show him or her how to act, i.e. by serving as a model. If the adult's requirements are well adapted to the stage of development attained by the child, they will facilitate the child's progressive integration in life in society.

Supporting the child's social development and socialization entails allowing the child to develop his or her personality while becoming a member of a group, and finding his or her place in the group without monopolizing all the space.<sup>38</sup> It means giving the child the opportunity to experience conflicts and to learn how to resolve them peacefully, sharing the space and materials with other children, and respecting both the weakest and the strongest.

As for the child's **moral development**, it is closely linked to his or her cognitive, emotional and social development. During early childhood, it consists, both for boys and for girls, of gradually becoming able to take into account the perspective of others before acting. A child of preschool age gradually distinguishes between what is allowed and what is not. This child progressively becomes aware of **what should or should not be done under a given circumstance**, in other words of the social conventions. This child generally feels that an action is good or bad according to the positive or negative consequences that it entails for him or her.

It is only towards age 6 or 7 that the child will begin to distinguish between what is good and what is bad, what is fair and what is not. Consequently, it is important that the person responsible for the child at the childcare establishment take into account, within the context of his or her interventions, the child's ability to consider the point of view of others, according to his or her age.<sup>39</sup> This person must also take into account the fact that the child must occasionally learn to deal with differences in values and standards that may exist between the child's family environment and the childcare environment.

#### 4.4 COGNITIVE DIMENSION

Certain physiological variables influence the child's cognitive development, in particular the level of maturity of his or her nervous system. Indeed, the latter plays a preponderant role in the development of the senses that the child uses to establish links between objects, persons and situations that he or she encounters.

The cognitive dimension develops through the child's interactions with persons and objects of his or her environment, which explains the importance of having a stimulating environment.<sup>40</sup> Ideally, in this environment there should be materials and games which suit the child's tastes and which lead the child to discover, experiment and persevere in order to acquire new knowledge and new skills.

18-36  
MONTHS

Asking a child who is 2 or 3 years old to classify, arrange in series, assemble, disassemble, fill and empty objects develops the child's sense of observation, helps the child to familiarize him or herself with the properties of objects and allows the child to acquire the notion of quantity or to recognize differences and similarities.

When the proposed materials and challenges correspond to the child's level of development, the child evolves according to his or her potential and becomes well prepared for subsequent learning activities, while avoiding discouragement. **Spatio-temporal organization** also facilitates the cognitive development of the child, who must have sufficient time and space to play, explore, wonder, manipulate objects and discover at his or her own pace.

The child also develops his or her own cognitive skills by taking the initiative for his or her activities, by being creative and by using his or her **imagination**. When a child plays, he or she experiments and refines skills such as **reasoning, deduction, analogy and symbolic representation**. Play allows the child notably to classify, arrange in series, situate in time and in space, invent and recognize the meaning conveyed by objects, images, sounds, odours and situations.

The adult who is responsible for the child in the childcare setting supports the child's cognitive development by asking questions about what the child is doing and by discussing with him or her the discoveries made. In so doing, the adult helps the child to **structure his or her thoughts** through reflection and reasoning, to familiarize him or herself with the notion of quantity, to recognize similarities and differences in what the he or she sees, to deduce and to compare. Older children will progressively introduce themselves to abstract thought by learning to use symbols, pictograms or by calling to mind past or imagined situations.

Moreover, cognitive development is closely related to the emotional and social dimension. A child who is confident is more likely to learn. A child who is well integrated in the group is more inclined to show an interest in others and in his or her environment. Similarly, learning activities at the cognitive level are closely linked to the development of language: indeed, language allows the child to reflect and to translate into words what he or she sees, hears, creates or invents.

Thanks to the environment and the activities that the childcare establishment offers to children, the child is able to evolve in his or her **understanding of the world**. Day after day, the child better grasps the relations that exist between objects and events, develops his or her thoughts and learns to reason coherently and to devise **strategies for resolving problems** that arise. The child gradually learns to observe a situation, recognize a problem, imagine possible solutions, experiment them and, as part of a trial and error process, draw the appropriate conclusions.

#### 4.5 LANGUAGE DIMENSION

Finally, life in a group promotes the development of language skills (oral, written, body and artistic) and symbolic representation, skills which play a major role in the evolution of the child's thoughts. Interactions with others, associated with various representations of the cultural universe (images, books, objects, etc.) stimulate comprehension of spoken language and verbal expression of the child's emotions and ideas.

The child's verbal interactions with adults and peers allow the child to understand that an object is associated with a sound, which he or she progressively tries to reproduce. Gradually, the child reproduces sounds, acquires vocabulary and makes progress at the level of both oral **comprehension** and **expression**. To stimulate the development of oral language, educators or home childcare providers can **sustain the pleasure that children derive from playing with words** by making them aware of the fact that there are funny words, words that sing, words that rhyme, words that begin with the same sound, etc. Put another way, educators or home childcare providers help children to develop their **phonological conscience**. They can accompany the daily nursery rhyme, song or poem activities (e.g.: for snacks, when putting away toys, when getting dressed, etc.) to make these activities more fun.<sup>41</sup>

0-18  
MONTHS

For infants, being put in the presence of varied and colourful objects, images, books and toys makes it possible to put words on the objects that surround them and on their actions. The adult stimulates the development of the children's language and, as a result, their cognitive and social development.



The adult also pays attention to the child's **vocabulary, pronunciation**, the order of words in his or her sentences or the use that the child makes of words, for research has shown that a child's level of vocabulary is a good predictor of his or her later success at school. But being able to pronounce the words correctly is not enough. The child must also be able to use the language in a manner that is appropriate to the situation: expressing emotions, asking questions, making links between facts or events.

To foster the acquisition of **oral language**, the adult must take the time to listen to children, to speak to them about what they are experiencing, what interests them or what has caught their attention. Educators or home childcare providers encourage children to describe what they see, to express what they feel. They support children when trying to communicate with others, encourage them to use new words, correct their errors of meaning, reformulate their sentences correctly and, above all, give meaning to their behaviours – for example by interpreting the gestures that children make (Would you like the ball?). Educators or home childcare providers pay attention to what the children say rather than to the way in which they say it, while providing the children with the right word or by adding more elements to their sentence to convey additional information.

The childcare establishment is also an excellent setting for stimulating and exercising other forms of language, such as bodily expression and artistic expression. **Artistic creation** allows the child to express his or her ideas and emotions in an ever more precise and subtle manner: exercising the child's voice (songs, nursery rhymes), movements (dance, mime, music), imitations (role-playing) and representations in two or three dimensions (construction, modeling, painting, drawing). Educators and home childcare providers also have an important role to play, particularly in underprivileged settings, in the field of **promoting awareness about the surrounding culture**: films, theater plays, concerts or other productions for children.

The educator or home childcare provider also awakens the child's awareness to the **world of reading and writing**, notably by interacting with the child while reading a story (talking about the characters, the key events, the outcome, etc.) or by inviting the child to do an arts and crafts activity based on a story that was told.<sup>42</sup> He or she increases the opportunities for the child to have contact with books, posters, pictures or a computer, encourages the child to draw shapes, asks him or her to tell a story that will then be included in a booklet or to mime various situations, all such activities being in the form of play. Indeed, research has shown that children to whom an adult has begun to read at an early age, ideally before age 3 and a half, have an advantage when it comes to vocabulary acquisition and do better at school.<sup>43</sup>

It is to the advantage of a childcare establishment, which has the possibility of doing so, to seek the collaboration of various specialists of the health and social services centre (CSSS, CLSC component) on its territory. These specialists should be able to support the establishment in its actions and to suggest various preventive or corrective activities, notably in relation to the motor (occupational therapist, physiotherapist), emotional (psychologist), social (psychoeducator) and language (speech therapist) development of children.



### To delve into this subject further:

- What activities do we do or interventions do we make to promote the emotional development of the children entrusted to us? Their motor development? Their social development? Their cognitive development? Their language development?
- Do we promote all of these dimensions or do we favour only a few? Is there one that is more neglected? If so, which one?
- Who could help us make sure that our activities stimulate all dimensions of the child's development?
- Can we call on speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychomotor or other services of the CSSS (CLSC component) of our territory, community organizations or other resources: parents, trainees or others?

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# Part 2

## APPLICATION



As we have just seen, the interventions of educators and home childcare providers must draw inspiration from a number of theoretical foundations and basic principles and take into account the latest knowledge in the child development field.

The main key notions that should guide educators and home childcare providers in their interventions with children include recognizing the child's active role in his or her development, the child's pleasure in discovering and experimenting through play, respecting the child's pace, needs and tastes, the child's right to choose the activities and materials that interest him or her, encouraging the child to develop his or her autonomy, self-confidence and confidence in others, to communicate with peers while respecting their differences, to find solutions to the difficulties that arise, and to be creative.

Over the last few years and thanks notably to the various types of training offered by associations and professional groups, a growing number of educators and home childcare providers have integrated in their childcare practices the objectives of ensuring the development of the whole child and the basic principles listed in Part One of the educational program. However, this is a process where efforts to improve must be on-going.

**Let's now look at how these more theoretical elements can be given tangible form** in actual practice, i.e. how they can be applied:

- to the educational intervention with children;
- to the structuring of the activities offered;
- to the layout of the childcare premises;
- and finally, to the relationship that educators or home childcare providers have with parents.

Each childcare establishment is invited to draw inspiration from these applications, proposed **for illustration** purposes, to enrich and adapt them in order to meet its needs (e.g.: establish a balanced program of activities, choose appropriate educational materials, plan a continuous education program for the establishment or its staff). Each person working in a childcare establishment is also invited to give thought to his or her practice, alone or with colleagues, as part of an on-going effort to promote quality.

# 5 Educational intervention

## *In brief*

An educational intervention is a process whereby educators and home childcare providers act with each child to best meet his or her needs. This intervention entails **four steps**:

### **Observation**

This important but often neglected step makes it possible to find out the preferences, the needs and the abilities of each child. The information collected orients interventions, in addition to contributing material for discussions with parents. In order to facilitate the analysis, the observations are recorded in writing using various tools: anecdotal sheet, observation chart, childcare log, rhythm chart (for infants), etc.

### **Planning and organization**

This step allows educators and home childcare providers to anticipate activities and interventions that will best meet the needs and preferences of children in a balanced manner, to select materials and to prepare the physical environment so that the activities unfold smoothly. The setting of a daily schedule provides reference points for children and helps ensure a seamless transition between activities. This schedule will respect the pace of development of children and will remain flexible to leave room for the unexpected.

### **Intervention**

During this step, educators or home childcare providers accompany children in their activities and intervene if necessary to support and encourage them. Educators or home childcare providers enrich children's games by proposing variants or by introducing new elements so that children develop by moving from the known to the unknown.

### **Reflection-feedback**

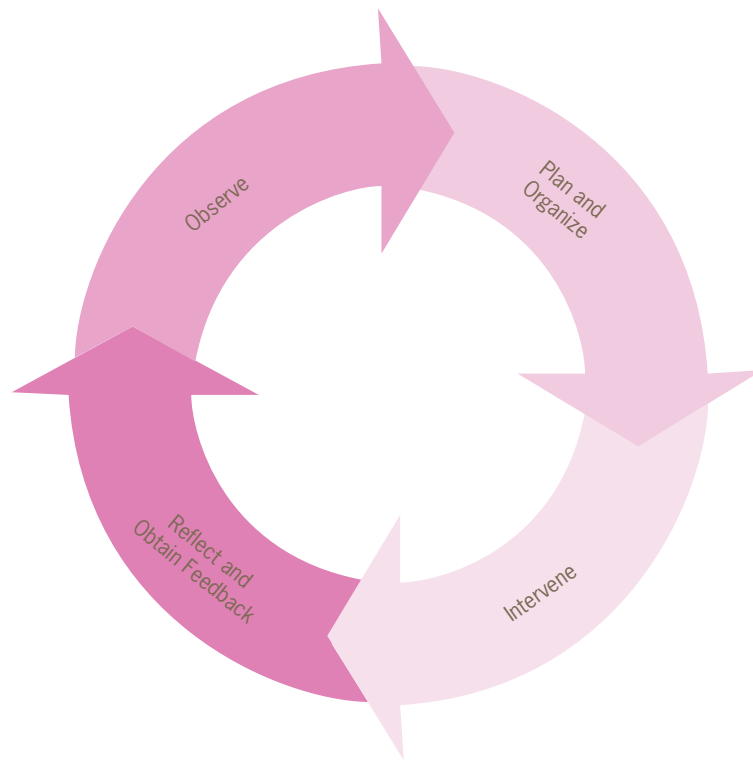
This step enables educators or home childcare providers to reflect on their practices and to fine-tune their interventions. It also gives them the opportunity to evaluate all of the elements that have been put in place to ensure the comprehensive and harmonious development of children. Finally, this step contributes to the consistency in the interventions of the childcare team and to the improvement of the quality of services.

There are also **various intervention styles**, namely various ways of intervening with children in a childcare setting. Some are more authoritarian, others more permissive and still others more democratic.

**A democratic intervention** promotes the exercise of free choice of the child and encourages the child to participate in decisions, in accordance with his or her abilities, while following certain rules of conduct and safety. The adult supports the child in his or her initiatives while respecting the child's pace of development. This person encourages the child to maintain relations with his or her peers and to take his or her rightful place in the group. By banking on the fields of interest and strengths of each child, this intervention style promotes the child's autonomy and self-confidence while offering him or her good opportunities to socialize.

An educational intervention is what allows the educator or home childcare provider to adequately meet the needs of children. It is a process that entails four steps: observation, planning and organization, intervention and reflection-feedback. The entire process can be carried out in a few minutes (when an immediate action is required) or unfold over one or more days.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 4. Educational Intervention Process**



## 5.1 OBSERVATION

Observation first allows educators and home childcare providers **to get to know** each child of their group well. This activity is an essential component of their work. All the other steps ensue from the results of this observation. Observation allows the person responsible for the children to find out what interests them, their preferences, their temperament, their sensitivity, their state of health and their emotional state, their strengths and difficulties, their level of ability when interacting with others and their environment, the skills that have been acquired, and those in the process of being acquired. This activity provides **facts that will contribute to the reflection and then to the action of educators or home childcare providers** with children, in addition to sustaining discussions with parents.

By observing children, educators or home childcare providers are also better able to grasp the dynamics of the group (leadership style, quality of interactions, types of communication, etc.). This knowledge will enable them to further promote the comprehensive development of each child afterwards. Observation also provides an opportunity to make sure that the layout of the premises and the materials put at the disposal of children are adequate, safe, varied and interesting.

Through observation, it is also possible to identify potential difficulties in some children and to thus be able to offer them the appropriate support. The observation may, for example, reveal that a child rarely finishes the activities begun. The person having identified this difficulty can then take various steps to maintain the child's interest longer and to encourage the child to finish what he or she starts. Observation also makes it possible to orient the learning that a child can acquire in a situation that he or she will have chosen. It also reveals the new challenges that the child appears ready to take up.

By resorting to various observation techniques, the adult is able to **maintain a certain neutrality** in relation to the child being observed. The systematic recording of observation data is an important source of information that can be regularly consulted, analyzed and evaluated. An anecdotal sheet is a good example of a direct observation tool. The educator or the home childcare provider uses this tool to describe the precise behaviour of the child as well as the context in which it occurs (day, time, materials used, presence or absence of peers, place where the action unfolds). The person accurately and concisely makes a note of the child's behaviour. These notes must be easy to understand when they are consulted later.

The adult sticks to observable facts, avoiding any form of judgment. However, to make good use of the facts gathered during the observation, the person must **interpret these facts** in light of the knowledge that he or she has of the child. The anecdotal sheet is also used to record particular events, unusual activities, anecdotes and behaviours that reflect the child's skills, efforts or difficulties. Observation is usually done on a daily basis, at different times of the day, by focusing on one child at a time.

Several other observation tools also exist: childcare log, daily report, notebook, observation chart, rhythm chart, thematic list, checklist,<sup>45</sup> etc. The person chooses the tool with which he or she feels most at ease and according to the child's age, the type of observation that the person wishes to record and the goals. Does he or she want to make an assessment of the proficiencies that the child has recently acquired (for example, acquisition of a skill), describe the progress that the child has made in relation to a given dimension of his or her development, determine the place that the child occupies in the group, or identify a particular difficulty that the child is trying to overcome?

0-18  
MONTHS

For infants, a rhythm chart may be useful for collecting information that will be conveyed to the parents. This tool can be used to record information concerning the child's sleep patterns, bowel movements, appetite, when the child cries, his or her emotional state, etc..<sup>46</sup>

By getting into the habit of observing children on a daily basis, the adult in charge will be better able to organize his or her subsequent interventions: arranging the premises, finding and putting at the disposal of children materials which they need to take part in play activities that are in line with their fields of interest and that take into account their level of development.

## 5.2 PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

The second step entails several aspects, namely setting of the schedule for the day, organization of activities, arrangement of premises and preparation of materials that will be made available to children. The aim of this step is to ensure that all activities and experiences proposed to children are stimulating and allow them to progress and to grow while respecting their preferences and their pace.

On the one hand, this second step makes it possible to **establish a balance between the various types of activities proposed**: spontaneous and directed activities, calm and more active activities, outdoor and indoor activities. Educators and home childcare providers thus offer children a framework that allows them to experience moments of stimulation and interiorization adapted to their pace and without needless pressure. Highly varied activities generally result in a more sustained interest on the part of children and facilitate changes in the supervision and activity coordination methods employed. They also allow children to have individual experiences, experiences in small groups or in large groups. Variety helps to stimulate comprehensive development in that each type of activity generates a particular experience that is different from and complementary to the previous or following ones. Educators and home childcare providers also carefully plan free workshop periods, which allow children to learn how to organize their time and activities on their own, while giving the adult good opportunities to observe children.

Moreover, planning **facilitates the unfolding** of the day's various activities (routine activities, outings, free play, activities in a large group, etc.) **and helps to ensure a smooth transition** between them. By planning materials and activities (nursery rhymes, songs, exploration of new materials, etc.), the adult facilitates the holding of these regular day-to-day activities in a fun-filled atmosphere, while avoiding needless waiting periods, which allows him or her to be more available to interact with the children.

With good planning, the adult is also able to **take into account the age of children** as well as their need for stability and emotional security. A fairly stable schedule from one day to the next allows children to anticipate and imagine the activities to come. That way, they will develop time references that reassure them and enable them to feel more at ease.



Planning **must, however, remain flexible**. If the person keeps some leeway, he or she can easily manage the unexpected events that are sure to come up (keen interest that children show in a given activity which they would like to continue for a longer period of time, change in the weather conditions, arrival of a new child in the group, etc.). With older children, part of the planning may also be carried out in collaboration with them, notably in an open model or approach. Such flexibility helps ensure that the children's preferences and their pace of development are respected.

### 0-18 MONTHS

The structuring of activities for infants is organized according to the unfolding of the daily care rituals and customary activities – the arrival and departure of children, play periods, snacks and meals, nap, playing outdoors, etc. – as well as the personal care activities (changing diapers, getting dressed) which permit very important one-on-one moments with each child, according to the child's own needs and pace. Such moments promote the development of a privileged emotional relationship between the adult and the child.<sup>47</sup>

The adult may occasionally consider doing long-term planning according to the interests of the children or based on a specific theme (holiday or season, for example). However, even in this case, regular daily planning is useful to make sure that the arrangement of the premises and the choice of activities meet the needs and are in line with the fields of interest of children.

After having planned the schedule and activities that will be proposed to the children during the day or in the upcoming week, the person organizes the environment so that the activities can unfold smoothly. This step presupposes that the adult in charge will select and prepare the necessary materials as well as arrange the room accordingly. This preparation may take place with the collaboration of the children, at least the older ones.

## 5.3 INTERVENTION

Throughout the day and while activities are taking place, the adult in charge of the group of children remains available and attentive to what the children are experiencing in order to **coach them and guide them** in their discoveries and learning. This adult intervenes at the request of the child, when the child encounters a problem that he or she is unable to solve alone, or to encourage and support the child when he or she no longer knows what game to play or appears to be bored. The adult may also modify the arrangement of the room along the way or propose additional materials to children to enrich their play activities and promote stimulating experiences. However, it is important to **refrain from doing things in the place of the child**, in order to allow the child to be his or her own agent of development.

### 18-36 MONTHS

To promote the development of the seriation concept, for example, containers of various sizes and their respective lids can be placed on a table so that children can have fun associating a container with its lid (association of a set of objects with another set by trial and error).

The role of the adult in charge consists of **encouraging** wherever possible **children to explore** the world around them, by taking into account the particular preferences at a given moment. The adult supports each child so that he or she plans his or her activities, accomplishes them and reviews his or her experiences. The adult invites children to choose activities, playmates, materials, etc., encourages them to use the materials put at their disposal and to team up with peers, prompts them to talk about their discoveries and experiences, and meets the needs which they express.

## 5.4 REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

The fourth and final step, reflection-feedback, allows educators or home childcare providers to **take stock** of what happened during an event or an activity during the day and to plan the interventions of the following day based on their reflection and feedback. This step also enables them to **reflect on their practices** in order to avoid getting caught up in a routine that no longer meet the needs of the children. Taking some time to evaluate their interventions allows educators and home childcare providers to keep those interventions that are profitable, to discard or readjust those that did not produce the anticipated results and to come up with new activities, if necessary.

It is also an opportunity to evaluate the relevance of the layout of the premises and to determine if the resources available are used to their maximum, while identifying those elements that should be modified. Finally, this step allows educators and home childcare providers to verify the accuracy of the observations made, the insightfulness of the planning and the relevance of the interventions. During this stage, the person may, for example, give thought to the following questions:

- Did the proposed activities and materials allow the children to consolidate their acquisitions? To acquire new skills? Which ones?
- Did my interventions foster my relationship with each child?
- Were the proposed activities and materials appropriate for the children's level of development? Did they correspond to the children's fields of interest? Did they promote all dimensions of children's development? Did they allow children to have enriching experiences?

- Did the children demonstrate new tastes? How did I adjust?
- How can I improve the manner in which this activity unfolds?
- Did this activity take place in a good atmosphere? Were there conflicts between children? How were they resolved? Which children were involved?
- How can I enrich the experiences that children will have tomorrow or in the upcoming days?
- What information could I look for concerning certain questions (resolving conflicts, self-control in children, expressing their emotions, etc.)?
- To what extent did my attitude, my presence or my actions influence the unfolding of the activity?

This last step enables educators or home childcare providers to evaluate all of the elements that influence the child's well-being. Establishing links between their observations and their knowledge allows these educators and childcare providers to make the necessary changes with a view to fostering the harmonious, comprehensive development of children. While this step can be carried out individually, the contribution of a pedagogical support officer or colleagues adds to its effectiveness. Moreover, such collaboration fosters the consistency of the educational interventions with all groups of children and ensures the establishment of a concerted approach in the interventions.<sup>48</sup>



## 5.5 INTERVENTION STYLES

Just as there are different parenting styles, there are different intervention styles in a child-care environment. The main ones are: the directive or authoritarian style, the permissive or laissez-faire style, and the democratic style.

In the case of the **directive intervention style**, it is the adult who controls activities, the schedule and the organization of the room. It is the adult who shows children what to do according to the objectives that he or she will have determined.

With **the permissive style**, the control lies in the hands of children. The adult lets them do what they want, the schedule is flexible, and play activities are the central element as the day unfolds. The adult intervenes only if the children request it or to restore order.

Finally, in the **democratic style**, adults and children share power. Adults provide children with a balance between their desire for freedom and their need for security. They create a rich environment where children have choices and decisions to make, and support children when they have problems to solve. With this intervention style, errors and conflicts are seen as learning opportunities.

Several adults switch, consciously or unconsciously, from one style to another several times a day, which may result in a feeling of insecurity on the part of children, who are then no longer able to anticipate what is expected of them. But **the person who succeeds in adopting the democratic style fairly consistently will build a relationship with the children allowing them to be more motivated, have more personal projects and develop their own knowledge more**. In this way, the adult discovers the personal resources of each child in the group and can provide each one with the support he or she needs.

**Table 1. Intervention styles**

Directive style	Democratic style	Permissive style
Educators or home childcare providers possess the power most of the time.	Children and educators or home childcare providers share power.	Children possess the power most of the time.
They give instructions, directions, explanations.	Educators or home childcare providers observe the strengths of children and support their play activities.	Educators or home childcare providers intervene at the request of children and to restore order.
The activity program is made up of learning objectives which educators or home childcare providers determine.	The activity program stems from the initiatives of children and key experiences, which promote their development.	The activity program ensues from the play activities of the children.
They place value on exercises and simulations.	Educators or home childcare providers place great value on the active learning of children.	Educators or home childcare providers place great value on the play activities of children.
They use punishment as a group management strategy.	They use a problem resolution approach to settle conflicts between children.	They use diversified approaches to manage the group.

Source: M. HOHMANN et al., op. cit., p. 43.

Educators or home childcare providers must **show flexibility, but also consistency** in their interventions. An overly rigid or overly authoritarian intervention leads to conformism or opposition in the child, for it does not sufficiently take into account each child's personality and uniqueness. Conversely, an overly permissive intervention develops the child's individualism, but also leads to a feeling of insecurity because the child is not offered the minimum guidelines that he or she needs for a successful adaptation. In both cases, the child is then likely to develop anxiety or aggressiveness.

However, a democratic intervention allows the child to express his or her needs or opposition or to submit his or own solution to a dilemma or a conflict. With this intervention style, children and adults can take part jointly in certain decision-making activities. It presupposes a sharing of power between educators or home childcare providers and children depending on the circumstances, the context, the age of the children and their skills. It is **a relationship where each person has the possibility to express his or her needs and limitations and to negotiate solutions** that are acceptable to the entire group.

A democratic intervention is situated **half way between an authoritarian intervention and a permissive intervention**. In the case of an authoritarian or directive intervention, the adult chooses for the children, whereas with a democratic intervention, the adult leaves room for the children in the decisions that concern them. However, it is important to avoid moving towards a permissive approach, which gives children the freedom to do what they want, when they want, out of a desire to respect their wishes and autonomy, but without having a reference framework on which they can base their actions.<sup>49</sup>

While it is up to educators or home childcare providers to see to the health and safety of children, supervise their activities and make sure that the day unfolds smoothly, for instance, children can nevertheless take part in certain decisions that fall within their realm. **A democratic intervention style thus promotes active learning**, because it gives children the necessary latitude to make choices and, in so doing, to learn at their own pace and according to their fields of interest. It also promotes their socialization by developing, among other things, their sense of responsibility and their autonomy, by teaching them self-confidence, to have self-respect and to respect others. This intervention style also gives them the opportunity to communicate with their peers, to take initiatives or to make compromises for the well-being of the group.

Although they have clear expectations of the children, educators or home childcare providers who adopt a democratic intervention style show flexibility. Their requirements and their instructions are limited in number, but are clear and well adapted to the age of the children. A girl or a boy who does not comply with these requirements and instructions will be asked to behave, and if he or she persists in refusing to comply, his or her actions will be followed by foreseeable consequences. However, these consequences must be fair and reasonable and must bring the child to reflect on his or her actions. Punitive measures such as reprimand, rejection, humiliation or corporal punishment must be avoided, for they will cause the child to develop negative feelings towards him or herself and towards others.

In groups of children over 3 years of age, when conflicts arise between children, the adult in charge can first let the children find their own solutions. Once the conflict has been resolved, if the solution is to the disadvantage of one of the parties involved, the adult can ask the children to identify the advantages and drawbacks of the solution for each party, and try to find a solution that will be advantageous for all parties. However, if the children do not find a solution in a reasonable time period or if the situation degenerates, the adult will assist the children in the search for a solution that is acceptable to all, for example by asking them about possible actions or by suggesting solutions.

#### To delve into this subject further:

- *Do I take the time to observe the children of my group and to jot down my observations before proposing activities to the children?*
- *Does everyone find what they are looking for?*
- *Do I think matters over and readjust after having some experience with the children, or am I more on “auto pilot”?*
- *What is my intervention style most of the time: authoritarian, permissive or democratic?*
- *Am I consistent at this level from one day to the next?*

44. N. ROYER (Ed.), *Le monde du préscolaire*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2004, 276 p.

45. D. BERTHIAUME, *L'observation de l'enfant en milieu éducatif*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2004, p. 149.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

47. J. POST et al., *Prendre plaisir à découvrir: guide d'intervention éducative auprès des poupons et des trottineurs*, translation of *Tender care and early learning: supporting infants and toddlers in child care settings*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2003, p. 126-127.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

49. M. HOHMANN et al., *op. cit.*, p. 43.

## 6 Structuring of Activities

### *In brief*

The ability of childcare establishments to achieve their objectives depends in large part on the organization of activities that take place in the establishments on a day-to-day basis. By offering an activity program that respects the basic principles of the educational program and that fosters the development of children in all their dimensions, childcare establishments contribute to the harmonious development of children.

This section comprises the following elements:

#### **Routine and transitional activities**

These activities occupy a large place in a childcare establishment, particularly for infants. Hygiene-related care, meals, snacks, naps, putting things away, welcoming children and their departure are all opportunities for the child to have privileged contacts with the adult who is taking care of him or her, while allowing the child to develop his or her autonomy and socialization. All during these activities, the child engages in learning that stimulates his or her development at all levels and allows him or her to acquire a healthy lifestyle.

#### **Play periods**

Play is essential for a child's development. The childcare establishment offers the child, both indoors and outdoors, play activities adjusted to his or her abilities. Whether it is during open activities or as part of activities proposed by the adult, play periods include individual games and group games. During these periods, the adult stimulates the creativity of children and supports them in their search for solutions.

Outdoor play promotes physical activities involving gross motor skills (running, climbing, sliding, jumping, pedaling). Suited to large-deployment activities, this type of play also allows children to have different sensorial experiences that vary according to the seasons.

Activities that take place in a childcare establishment are classified into two categories: **routine and transitional activities and play periods**. These activities take place in a physical environment and in a climate that can promote or compromise their smooth unfolding. An organization of these activities that respects the basic principles of the educational program will foster the harmonious and comprehensive development of children.

## 6.1 ROUTINE AND TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITIES

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.2: Planning and organization (schedule)

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.5: Cooperation between the childcare personnel or home childcare providers and parents is essential for the harmonious development of the child

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.1: Emotional dimension, 4.2: Physical and motor dimension, and 4.4: Cognitive dimension, and chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.1: Each child is unique

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.1: Emotional dimension

Far from being insignificant, routine and transitional activities are the foundations upon which the planning of the daily schedule of the childcare establishment is built. They include welcoming children and their departure, meals and snacks, hygiene-related care, the nap or rest period and putting things away. **The routine activities** of babies may even occupy up to 80% of the daily schedule.<sup>50</sup> They represent countless opportunities to stimulate all dimensions of the child's development and to help him or her acquire a healthy lifestyle, in particular when it comes to food and hygiene. Moreover, it is important to request collaboration from the parents in encouraging the child to keep up these habits (washing hands before meals, for example) at home.

During these activities, the child learns to recognize the needs of his or her body (eating, sleeping, dressing appropriately for the season, going to the bathroom, etc.), to express these needs, and becomes increasingly capable of responding to them. Routine activities are also an opportunity for the child to reinforce notably his or her motor skills and to acquire a feeling of being able to do things (learning to put on his or her shoes, brush his or her teeth or using his or her utensils alone, for example).

During routine activities, educators and home childcare providers respect the pace of each child and encourage his or her autonomy, while seeing to the group's safety. These moments also allow the adult to establish a privileged contact with each child (bottle-feeding time, changing diapers, getting dressed, etc.), which promotes the development of a reassuring attachment relationship.

As for **transitional activities**, they ensure the links between the various moments of the day, which usually involve a change of location, educator or activity. For example, between an open activity period and an external outing, children are invited to put away their play things and materials in the storage spaces provided for this purpose.

Routine and transitional activities must take place in a calm and fun-oriented atmosphere. Like play periods, these activities are planned and supported by a good organization of space, materials and the intervention. Nursery rhymes help during waiting periods, short animated activities<sup>51</sup> facilitate trips, the organization of the premises and materials encourages putting away activities, etc. Similarly, having the cloakroom near the exit to the outdoor play area contributes to minimizing movements and waiting periods during outings.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.2: Planning and organization

### 6.1.1 Hygiene-related care

Hygiene-related care mainly includes washing one's hands, brushing one's teeth,<sup>52</sup> blowing one's nose, changing diapers and toilet training. The way in which this care is provided plays an important role in the prevention of infections in a childcare establishment.<sup>53</sup> These activities are privileged **opportunities** for children **to acquire good living habits**. The example of the adult and the learning of the proper technique with the help of a nursery rhyme or a song will encourage children to acquire these habits<sup>54</sup> while having fun.

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.2: Physical and motor dimension, and 4.4: Cognitive dimension

To encourage children to be autonomous when it comes to hygiene, the premises may be arranged in such a way as to prompt children to want to "do it on their own". The presence of an accessible soap dispenser and a footstool near the sink encourages children to wash their hands. Making sure that each child has his or her own well identified toothbrush also helps.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development

Hygiene-related care also provides **ideal moments to forge closer ties** between educators and the child, particularly in the case of changing diapers for infants. This care promotes the development of an attachment relationship and helps strengthen the child's feeling of security. Toilet training, for its part, must respect the child's pace. This learning will occur much more easily if the adult in charge waits until the child attains the level of physiological and cognitive development required and shows the desire.

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.1: Emotional dimension

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, sections 3.1: Each child is unique, 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development, and 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process, chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child sections 4.2: Physical and motor dimension, and 4.4: Cognitive dimension, and chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.1: Observation

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.2: Physical and motor dimension, and 4.4: Cognitive dimension

See chap. 3 : Basic Principles of the Program, sections 3.1: Each child is unique, and 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.2: Physical and motor dimension

### 6.1.2 Meals and snacks

Food is an extraordinary object of pleasure and learning for the very young. Meals and snacks are, for example, moments that are particularly well suited to **sensorial exploration**. Educators or home childcare providers will encourage children to observe the shapes and colours of food, to smell, touch, taste and even “listen to food”.<sup>55</sup>

Meals and snacks are also **ideal moments for developing the autonomy and the feeling of competence** of infants and children, who can learn how to feed themselves, use utensils, unwrap and peel a food item on their own. They are also an opportunity for children to show their food preferences and dietary requirements (e.g.: allergies) and for adults, to respect these preferences and requirements.

#### F

The home environment is particularly conducive to the participation of children at meal and snack time. Depending on their abilities, children can help in the preparation of meals (e.g.: put fruit on a plate, pour juice into glasses, clear the table).

#### 0-18 MONTHS

Adapting to the individual pace of each child includes giving a bottle to an infant when he or she is hungry. It is also waiting for the child’s signs before bringing the spoon or the glass towards his or her lips.

Meals and snacks are also ideal opportunities for educators or home childcare providers to promote the **acquisition of healthy food habits** on the part of children.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, putting children in small groups for meals and snacks allows them to converse with one another and with the adult while eating, thereby creating a warm environment and promoting the **development of their social skills** (waiting their turn to be served, helping one another, etc.).<sup>57</sup>

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3: Social and moral dimension

18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

Little rituals and animated activities (songs, nursery rhymes, etc.) as well as a slow-paced carefree atmosphere help to make this period a moment of conviviality that lends itself to the forging of ties between the child and the adult, among children, and to the development of a feeling of belonging to the group.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.2: Planning and organization

### 6.1.3 Naps

Sleep helps ensure that the child's brain matures. It is also during sleep that certain hormones required for growth are secreted. Naps at the childcare establishment contribute to the development of the child's cognitive functions. Complementing night-time sleep, rest periods during the day are essential for the development of a young child.

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.2: Physical and motor dimension

The nap or relaxation period is all the more necessary in that childcare establishments are places of intense stimulation, particularly in the case of a multi-age group. A child who lacks sleep may be irritable or be unwilling to relate to others or to take part in activities. Towards 6 months of age, an infant may require from three to four naps per day. At around 12 months of age, the child goes for two naps and continues at this rate until the age of 18 months. The morning nap eventually disappears, while the afternoon nap grows longer.<sup>58</sup>

The need for sleep and its rhythm differ from child to child. Some children require sleep while others need to be active and vice-versa. Up to 3 1/2 or 4 years of age, most children go for a nap. In order to respect the rhythm of sleep of each child, it is customary to offer, even older children, a relaxation period in the afternoon.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.1: Each child is unique, and chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.1: Observation



See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.1: Observation

In order to plan and organize the nap ritual at the appropriate time, the adult pays special attention to signs of sleepiness (rubbing of eyes, yawning, daydreaming), for it is during this period, which lasts approximately ten minutes,<sup>59</sup> that children can let themselves fall asleep easily.

When it is time for the nap, the adult makes a point of reducing the sensory stimuli. Dimmed lighting (lights turned off or subdued), appropriate music or a soft song helps children fall asleep. A personal blanket or an object belonging to the child can also help him or her relax.

#### 6.1.4 Putting things away

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3: Social and moral dimension

Putting toys or other things away is an activity that must have meaning for children. Toys are put away when children have finished using them or when space is needed to dance, for example. A good system for putting things away encourages the participation of children and develops their autonomy at this level. Putting things away is an activity that entails problem-solving and can serve as a starting point for new discoveries and new ideas. It is also an opportunity, for children, to report broken objects or lost parts and, for the adult, to make children aware of the importance of respecting objects and materials.

The more clearly designated the interest areas or “corners” are, the more the organization of the “putting things away” activity will encourage children to get involved and will be functional. The toys that are used for similar purposes will be found, day after day, in their “corner” (blocks in the construction corner, hats, handbags and other accessories in the dress-up corner, etc.). Presented as a game, the “putting things away” activity gives rise to sorting, selection and association activities.

By announcing ahead of time the end of an activity that is under way, the educators or home childcare providers will respect each child’s pace and promote a better collaboration between children in the “putting things away” activity.

### 6.1.5 Welcome and departure

A place of transition between the home and the childcare setting, the cloakroom (or the hall in a family setting) is usually the place where families come into contact with the educator, the home childcare provider or other families. It is also and above all the place where the child leaves and is reunited with his or her parents and where all the little daily rituals take place<sup>60</sup> (glances, gestures, words, handing over of an object that belongs to the child, etc.), which reassure both parents and children at the time of separation.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS

To feel reassured, Sasha needs to see the educator before his mother or father leaves the childcare establishment. Alexi, for his part, finds it easier to get through this moment of transition if he can hold on to his stuffed teddy bear or if the parent that accompanied him, after having kissed him, waves goodbye as he or she leaves.

A warm and personalized welcome on the part of the educators or home childcare providers and good communication with the parents facilitate the separation process, the smooth unfolding of the transition and the harmonious integration of the child in the activities of the childcare establishment.

Educators and home childcare providers take advantage of the welcome and departure periods to create and maintain positive contacts with parents. Whether it is in the cloakroom, the hall or at the door of the room, there are numerous daily discussions with parents. These moments allow parents to give specific instructions concerning their child. In return, the educator or home childcare provider is able to inform parents of a new acquisition by the child or provide them with any other relevant information concerning their child. However, the nature and the duration of these exchanges will take the child's presence into account.

See chap. 2: Theoretical Foundations of the Program, section 2.2: Attachment theory

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.5: Cooperation between the childcare personnel or home childcare providers and parents is essential for the harmonious development of the child

0-18 MONTHS

The daily exchanging of information between parents and educators or home childcare providers about the sleep patterns, diet and general state of the infant is essential for his or her well-being. Consequently, the information provided by the parents is recorded on a sheet or in a notebook.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.4: Children learn through play

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.1: Each child is unique

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, sections 5.1: Observation, and 5.2: Planning and organization

## 6.2 PLAY PERIODS

Any activity can become play for children. **Spontaneous in nature**, play is characterized first and foremost by the pleasure it procures. That is why children show a great deal of interest in and devote a lot of time to play. It is their way of exploring the world. Play, whatever its type or form, involves challenges that need to be taken up, problems that have to be solved, and rules that must be followed. It is because a child invests so much of him or herself that the child's learning acquisitions associated with play affect all facets of his or her development.

Play in a childcare setting, whether it be **individual or in a group**, stimulates children, mainly due to the materials present. Play activities take place both outside and inside the childcare establishment. The yard, a park or any other suitable place offer children numerous opportunities to make discoveries and to learn through play.

Every child needs to participate in activities that correspond to his or her level of development and abilities. **The choice** of the proposed activity is made according to themes which correspond to the child's tastes. When the child has access to experiences that are at an appropriate level, he or she feels motivated and is able to succeed. In some cases, the adult will allow the child to repeat a newly acquired action to facilitate consolidation; in other cases, the adult will increase the level of difficulty of an activity by adding new materials and will thus offer an additional challenge to the child, even if this means supporting him or her if needed.

When planning the day, the adult responsible for a group of children takes into account his or her knowledge of the children to make available to them play materials that are stimulating, varied and adapted to their level of development, and to present activities that are in keeping with the objectives of comprehensive development. After having observed children of his or her group, the adult may, for instance, decide to offer them special materials or have them take part in new experiences. By arousing their curiosity, the adult offers children the possibility to diversify their actions and to acquire new skills. **The adult also takes into account the characteristics related to the gender of the children** for whom he or she is responsible (e.g.: greater motor needs on the part of boys; greater interest in verbal activities for girls).

During play periods, children have the choice of themselves determining their project based on the available materials or of taking part in an activity or a workshop proposed by the educator or home childcare provider. Whether it involves play as an open activity or a more directed activity, these periods **always presuppose the presence and, above all, the stimulating and democratic intervention of the adult**, which will allow the child to express his or her needs, tastes<sup>61</sup> and creativity. By showing that he or she understands the child's messages and by recognizing and supporting the child's choices and initiatives, the adult respects the child's preferences and pace of development, and the child becomes a partner in the decisions and in the unfolding of the play activity.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.5: Intervention styles, Democratic intervention

During certain routines or transitional periods, when the adult's attention is required for other purposes, notably welcoming children, preparing meals or changing diapers, the children have the possibility to take part in free play activities, without the adult's intervention. These play activities allow children to learn other things (sharing the most popular materials, interacting with their peers, resolving potential conflicts, etc.) and developing their autonomy.

### 6.2.1 Free workshop play

Free workshop play allows children to have access to materials grouped by theme according to their use (e.g.: reading, construction, imitation and role-playing, arts and crafts, modelling, etc.). Each group of materials occupies a separate space. The child chooses his or her activity or materials at his or her own pace and in the manner that suits him or her. The child also decides with whom he or she will carry out the project.

These periods allow the child to resolve unforeseen difficulties and to interact with his or her peers, with or without the help of the educator or the home childcare provider. They also give the child the opportunity to take part in numerous experiences and, in so doing, to complement or consolidate his or her knowledge, learn his or her limitations, and exercise his or her skills.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, sections 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development, 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process, and 3.4: Children learn through play

The role of the educators or home childcare providers does not consist of letting children choose the activity or the materials they want to play or use, while the educators or home childcare providers devote themselves to some other task. Rather, the educators or home childcare providers observe each child in the group to better define the child's fields of interest and to encourage him or her in his or her initiatives. The adults in charge become involved in the children's play (have fun with the children), promote relationships between them and remain available to offer children support in the carrying out of their projects, if necessary.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, sections 5.1: Observation, 5.2: Planning and organization, and 5.3: Intervention



See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.4: Cognitive dimension

The attentive presence of the adult in charge during the free workshop play period shows young children that they can count on the adult if needed and take certain risks because they feel at ease. This presence also allows the adult to respond quickly to requests for contact and comforting from one of the children.

The adult's considerate presence also encourages the child to develop his or her **creativity**. Indeed, each child has his or her own personal way of perceiving reality and expressing it. Encouraging the creativity of children entails allowing them to express their personal perception of things and receiving in a positive manner what the children express. It also involves having children invent new games, imagine new ways of doing things and find new solutions to a problem.

### 0-18 MONTHS

During the free workshop play period, Sylvia, an educator, is attentive to the infants. She invites them to explore the materials, to express themselves and to innovate. She comments on the success of toddlers and supports them in their interactions with their peers.

Free workshop play unfolds in **three stages**. In the first stage, the adult in charge has the child interrupt what he or she is doing, reflect, choose, explain. **Planning** is the preparatory stage during which the child chooses an activity according to the proposed themes or based on a type of game presented by the adult (e.g.: construction games). The child's self-questioning skills come into play: they help the child determine his or her goal (what do I want to build?), choose his or her playmates (with whom?), plan and organize his or her action (how will I go about doing things? where will I play? What else do I need?, etc.).

The planning stage, like the activity review stage, will vary in length according to the child's age. It often takes place simultaneously with the actual carrying out of the activity.

0-18  
MONTHS

An infant or a toddler may covet (choose) a stuffed toy located in a corner, decide to crawl over to get it and, having succeeded, realize with pride that he or she has carried out his or her plan.

0-18  
MONTHS

"What do you want to play with, Oliver?" Oliver points to the block corner. Even a toddler can begin the planning process by responding with a gesture or a word.<sup>62</sup>

The second stage is **the carrying out of the activity**. During the unfolding of workshop play, several children may take part in the same activity or play with the same type of materials, even if they aren't playing together. This may be an opportunity for a child to play alone, to observe what the other children are doing or to interact with them. Hence, the child evolves freely within certain limitations, such as respecting others, respecting materials and following instructions. The child may decide to alter or enrich what he or she had initially planned to do, for example after having observed the play activities of his or her playmates. Finally, it is the child who decides when he or she will stop the play activity. Workshop play may last a long time for some children, whereas for others, in particular the youngest, it will last for a relatively short period.

**The activity review** is the assessment or evaluation period that follows workshop play. It promotes a realization and questioning about the way in which the activity chosen by the child unfolded. This review allows the child to develop his or her vocabulary, sense of observation, memory and analytical mind.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, it promotes, even among the youngest children, the awareness that they can solve problems.

The adult asks the child to recall how the play activity unfolded and to talk about it (e.g.: say what he or she liked, the materials used, the discoveries made, the difficulties encountered). The review may be done individually or in a group, notably when the same activity has interested several children, or in order to promote listening and communication between them. The adult gives each child the time that he or she needs to express himself/herself and, for older children, a system can be established for taking turns speaking.

18-36  
MONTHS

3-5  
YEARS

Several means may be used to encourage children to take a look back at their activity: photos, presentation of achievements, etc..<sup>64</sup> It may also be interesting to encourage some children to resort to gestures and moving about the room to illustrate their thoughts.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, sections 5.1: Observation, 5.2: Planning and organization, and 5.3: Intervention

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child

### 6.2.2 Activities proposed by the adult

The activities proposed by the adult are usually intended for children from 3 to 5 years of age, but may occasionally be used with younger children. These activities allow children to make new experiences by exploring **new materials** and by experimenting with new notions. They give rise to new learning in a more structured context.

These activities also enable children to acquire new skills, develop skills that are not well mastered, or consolidate those that have already been acquired. They may also be an opportunity to foster a dimension of development that has not been stimulated much yet.

18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

The adult may, for example, make clay available to children and invite them to create sculptures. This contributes to the development of their fine motor skills, their ability to represent an object in space and their creativity. Similarly, a psychomotility session may be proposed to the children, using unusual materials (e.g.: giant Styrofoam blocks), to stimulate their gross motor skills.

Materials may be prepared prior to the arrival of children or with them. Children are then asked to spend a few moments in a group and to use the materials that are likely to interest them and are adapted to their level of development. If these materials are new, they will arouse the children's curiosity and spontaneously give rise to new activities. If children are familiar with the materials or have not explored them very much, this can also be an opportunity to discover new ways of using them. The materials are then made available to the children during free workshop play so that they can continue to explore them in a more autonomous manner.

The activities proposed by the adult also include **external outings** (library, theatre, fire station, etc.) as well as the **learning of songs and nursery rhymes** that can be recited during routine and transitional periods, certain gatherings, etc.





The adult may also propose an **activity-project**<sup>65</sup> based on the fields of interest of children (e.g.: ants, boats), a real situation (a child has lost a tooth) or a current event (annual celebration, season, flood, etc.). Semi-directed (the child calls into question, experiments with and enriches the activity), the activity-project will require that children use all of their skills and knowledge, which promotes their overall development.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS

Younger children can also take part in an activity-project. For example, during a dress-up activity for Halloween, a one-year old will have fun trying on and taking off hats, whereas a two-year-old will attach a sticker to a drawing of a pumpkin, for instance.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS B

In multi-age groups or groups including children with special needs, the activity-projects are chosen or organized according to each child's abilities. They then allow children to acquire skills corresponding to their stage of development,<sup>66</sup> while promoting mutual aid and tolerance.

Finally, these activities allow children to develop their feeling of belonging to the group and their social skills. By manipulating similar materials or by participating in the morning "chat", children have the opportunity to discuss, share their ideas, help one another when a difficulty arises and cooperate in the carrying out of a group project. They learn to affirm themselves, to recognize and accept their physical and cultural differences,<sup>67</sup> to resolve their interpersonal conflicts through negotiations and to respect one another.

Although an activity is proposed by the adult, it may be modified by the child, notably in relation to the use of materials, the addition of other materials or the length of the activity. A child may also prefer to do an activity other than the one proposed. Finally, as in the case of play activities in free workshop play, the presence of the adult is essential to coach children, support them in their exploration and promote their active participation. A group assessment period, at the end of the activity, will give children the chance to describe their experience (what they liked, the difficulties encountered, etc.), thereby promoting their language expression.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.5: Intervention styles

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3: Social and moral dimension

B: Children having special needs.



See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3:  
Social and moral dimension

### 6.2.3 Outdoor play

The **positive influence** of physical activity **on the health** of children is well recognized. Good growth, better posture, improved balance and greater self-esteem are just some of the benefits that pediatricians attribute to physical activity. Daily outdoor activities are all the more important in a childcare establishment since the child spends most of his or her day in a relatively confined area, with several children.

Physical activity, while it can and must take place inside the childcare establishment in case of bad weather, is much easier to practice in the yard or in a municipal park, owing mainly to the equipment present and the space available, which allow several children to take part at the same time in different activities involving intense movement. Whether it be climbing in a modular play structure, running, jumping or riding a tricycle, outdoor play is **the ideal activity for children to develop their motor skills and to take up numerous challenges.**

Outdoor play is also an opportunity for constantly renewed **sensory experimentation**, where the child can give free reign to his or her creativity, using natural elements (sand, pebbles, snow, etc.). Finally, it is an ideal moment to take part in large-deployment **cooperative play activities**, such as doing rolls, races, relay races, ball games, etc.

#### 0-18 MONTHS

Outdoor play allows infants to have varied sensory experiences: kinesic (wind blowing on their face), sound (chirping of birds), visual (ladybug on a leaf) and olfactory (freshly cut grass). It is also a good opportunity to have infants engage in psychomotor activities as well as to play sand and water games.

As with indoor activities, the educator or home childcare provider first plans the outdoor activities that will be proposed to the children. He or she puts at their disposal enriching and diversified materials that are in line with their fields of interest and becomes actively involved in the unfolding of the activity. The educator or home childcare provider also remains available to observe the children and to support them, if necessary, during the activity.

Outdoor activities and outings to the municipal park, the pool, the library, etc. are good opportunities to make children aware of the importance of respecting the environment and to introduce them to certain safety rules related to traffic, for example.

### To delve into this subject further:

- How do the organization and the unfolding of free workshop play encourage children's self-esteem? What is my role in this respect?
- What free workshop play activities impact several dimensions of the child's development at the same time?
- What activities most facilitate multi-age groups?
- What type of play promotes social and emotional development in particular? Cognitive development? Language development?
- How does outdoor play foster comprehensive development in infants? In children 18 months of age or older?

50. N. MALENFANT, "Essentielle et stimulante: la routine!", *Sans Pépins*, vol. 6, n° 3, October 2004, p. 1.
51. N. MALENFANT, *Routines et transitions en services de garde éducatifs*, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006, p. 282.
52. Concerning the hygiene measures that should be taken when brushing teeth, see: A. LAROSE, "Les mesures d'hygiène mises en place par le service de garde", in *La santé des enfants... en services de garde éducatifs*, Sainte-Foy, Les Publications du Québec, 2000, p. 66-69. (Early Childhood).
53. These activities take place outside the meal preparation area.
54. N. MALENFANT, *Routines et transitions en services de garde éducatifs*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
56. See *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating Focus on Preschoolers, a resource for educators and communicators*, which may be ordered on the web site of Health Canada. These are sheets providing suggestions on how to develop good dietary habits in preschoolers.
57. Particularly in multi-age groups.
58. M. THIRION and M.-J. CHALLAMEL, *Le sommeil, le rêve et l'enfant: de la naissance à l'adolescence*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1999, p. 84. (Family Library).
59. C. MORACHE, "À propos du sommeil de l'enfant", *Bougeotte, neurone et câlin: la bonne équipe*, vol. 1, n° 2, Fall of 2003, p. 3.
60. F. TOCHON, "Rituels de transition", in F. TOCHON and J.-M. MIRON, *op. cit.*, p. 21-40.
61. J. POST et al., *op. cit.*, p. 53.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
63. D. PELLETIER, *L'activité-projet: le développement global en action*, Mont-Royal, Modulo éditeur, 2001, p. 137-145.
64. M. HOHMANN et al., *op. cit.*
65. D. PELLETIER, *op. cit.*
66. D. PELLETIER, "L'activité-projet adaptée aux groupes multiâges", dans *ibid.*, p. 56-64.
67. C. LAVALLÉE and M. MARQUIS, *Éducation interculturelle et petite enfance*, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999, 233 p.

# 7 Structuring of the Premises

## *In brief*

The structuring of the premises includes their layout as well as making varied and high-quality materials available to children.

### **Layout of the premises**

Functional and safe premises, organized in such a way as to create a convivial, stimulating and warm atmosphere, facilitate the smooth unfolding of activities. The material organization of space and the arrangement of furniture and materials promote the autonomy of the children, the development of their identity and their socialization, reflect cultural diversity and meet the specific needs of each child.

### **Play materials**

Play materials must be safe and in good condition, appropriate to the children's stage of development, varied, stimulating and versatile. They must also be accessible, available in sufficient quantity and renewed regularly to maintain children's interest.

See chap. 2: Theoretical Foundations of the Program, section 2.1: Ecological approach

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.2: Physical and motor dimension

## 7.1 LAYOUT OF THE PREMISES

### 7.1.1 Physical environment in general

As we have seen, to develop harmoniously, a young child must first have a privileged emotional relationship with the adult who is responsible for him or her at the childcare establishment. The premises on which the child spends his or her day also contribute to the child's feeling of security. The younger the child is, the more sensitive he or she will be to sounds, colours, textures and shapes around him or her. The child's physical environment has an even greater impact on his or her well-being and behaviour since he or she often spends a large number of hours each day in this environment.

A layout of the premises that is **safe<sup>68</sup> and that promotes the health** of the children (adequate sanitary conditions,<sup>69</sup> good ventilation of the premises, sufficient natural light, temperature that is neither too cold nor too hot and controlled sound level) is an essential component of their well-being.<sup>70</sup> An infant especially comes into contact with the physical elements of his or her environment when he or she crawls, grabs on to furniture/equipment and puts objects in his or her mouth. Whether it be the bed, the toys, the high-chair or the stroller, everything in the child's physical environment must above all be clean and safe.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

Walls with neutral or bright colours, decorated with children's drawings, family pictures and the children's favourite characters, stable spatial reference points to help children get their bearings and organize their activities,<sup>71</sup> natural or artificial lighting controlled according to the activities and the time of day (blinds, curtains, dimmer switches), an intimate corner affording protection, with soft cushions and "cuddly" toys, as well as play materials that are varied and well presented help create a reassuring, warm, convivial and stimulating atmosphere.

A personal place (basket, locker) for each child, distinguished by a colour or a picture of his or her choice, where the child can put his or her belongings and achievements promote the **development of the child's identity**. Free access to varied and appealing play materials, flexible equipment adapted to the child's size and abilities, and encouragement to take part in the decoration of the premises and in the decisions concerning the childcare environment allow the child to exert control over his or her universe, promoting the child's **autonomy** and the development of his or her **self-confidence**.

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.1: Emotional dimension

## 0-18 MONTHS

The space reserved for play activities of infants is adapted to their motor skills. Non-mobile babies are placed on a mat and cushions, while infants who are able to crawl move about and play safely in different “corners”. When the infant is able to stand up, his or her field of action grows. Solid points of support allow the child to grab on and to lift him or herself to a vertical position. In a clear space, free from small toys and surrounded by large pillows or stuffed poufs, the child can rush towards and reach objects without the adult's assistance. The presence of an uneven floor surface (platform, small steps or light slope) will offer the child certain challenges.

## B

To facilitate the interaction of a child having special needs with his or her environment, educators or the home childcare provider, with the help of the CSSS (CLSC component) or rehabilitation centre, will adapt the space (bars attached to the wall, adapted washroom facilities, wheelchair access, sound elements, etc.) according to the child's specific limitations (motor, auditive or visual).

The presence of materials that call to mind customs of various countries or cultures or representing various impairments (dolls, figures, clothes, musical instruments, books and photos showing children having diversified characteristics and playing together, etc.) fosters the child's **feeling of belonging** as well as the **acceptance of his or her differences**.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, sections 3.1: Each child is unique, and 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process, and chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.1: Emotional dimension, and 4.3: Social and moral dimension

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3: Social and moral dimension

Through contact with their peers, children learn not only to express their needs by taking into account the requirements of others, but also to share play materials, to put them away and to respect them. Children also learn some safety rules concerning, for instance, moving about inside a childcare facility (cloakroom, kitchen, game room, yard, etc.) or a home childcare establishment (rooms of the house) or the use of toys and materials.

## F

In a family setting, certain areas are off limits to children; these are private areas reserved for the home childcare provider and his or her family. The instructions on this subject must be clear, and pictograms or physical barriers must restrict access to them (gate, closed door).

### 7.1.2 Layout of the indoor play area

The layout of the indoor play area creates a universe that peaks the curiosity of children and leads them to take part in a wide variety of play activities, alone, with other children or in parallel with others. The area is big enough to allow several children of different ages to move about, create and manipulate varied and stimulating materials. At the same time, it must allow a child wishing to be alone to withdraw for a short while, relax, daydream or simply observe other children playing in a corner.

## 0-18 MONTHS

Infants have the possibility to withdraw from the group in a comfortable “soft cushion corner” that the adult can see.

An open central area for group activities or gross motor activities with different interest areas on the perimeter is particularly well suited to meeting these requirements.



## Interest areas

An interest area or corner is a unit that presents in an appealing manner a variety of play materials promoting a specific type of play (e.g.: symbolic play, construction games, mobile toys).

This type of layout allows the child to see all of the interest areas. It stimulates the child's interest, encourages him or her to move about and facilitates movements between the various areas. By making the materials accessible, it ensures the child's free choice according to his or her fields of interest and encourages the child's autonomy. Moreover, this arrangement promotes the natural division of children into subgroups (two, three, four children) according to their tastes, while stimulating interpersonal relationships.

The organization of the play area into interest areas also promotes a personalized intervention by the educators or home childcare providers with the children. While this type of layout takes up more space than other types, it facilitates management. In addition, by making possible individual play activities and activities in small groups at the same time, this layout helps reduce the noise levels in the room. Relaxation, reading, music, construction, symbolic play and modelling are the most common themes of interest areas (see Appendix 2).

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, section 4.3: Social and moral dimension

See chap.3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.1: Each child is unique

## F

In a family setting, the various activity centres often consist of containers or baskets with the materials grouped together according to the various types of play activities (symbolic play, construction games, reading, music, etc.). The containers are taken out in the morning, and the material is arranged in the planned play area in such a way as to promote various choices of activities.



See chap. 5: Educational Intervention

If one takes into account the fact that children must have enough space to play without getting in the way of one another, the number of interest areas that may be laid out depends on the size of the childcare establishment, the configuration of the premises, the possibility of having access to other rooms and the type of educational intervention favoured.

### 0-18 MONTHS

The “soft” and “motor activity” corners are particularly well suited to the needs of infants.

### 18-36 MONTHS

Moreover, water and sand games as well as areas where children can run and climb appeal to toddlers in particular.



### ▾ Grouping of compatible interest areas, their designation and moving from one to another

The choice of the location of an interest area in relation to other areas is based on their compatibility. For example, relaxation and reading activities are situated away from more noisy areas and are designated as such to ensure peace and quiet for children who withdraw to these areas. The modelling or water games area should remain stationary, near a sink.

**F**

In a family setting, the “modelling” or “water games” activity takes place, wherever possible, near a water supply point at a location that is easy to clean up, more often than not the kitchen.

**F**

In a family setting, some pieces of furniture (sofas, tables, chairs, poufs, coffee-tables, etc.) may serve as divisions for different interest area sectors. Certain areas may be separated by cushions and mats.

The furniture arrangement allows children to move about easily from one area to the next as they choose, while enabling the adult to quickly spot children and observe them, wherever they may be.

The delineation of the interest area reduces the scattering of play materials; however, it is possible that a child may transfer the materials from one corner to another as well as “non-corner” play materials in the central area. For example, the use of a disguise may be necessary in role-playing that takes place in the block corner depending on the children’s creativity. Some toys are occasionally used in several areas – for example, figures or little toy cars that are found in the “construction corner”. However, if children often transport materials from one area to another located at the opposite end of the room, it may perhaps be necessary to rethink the location in order to avoid too much traffic.

F: Home childcare operations.

### ▾ Flexibility in the layout of the premises

The spatial organization remains flexible, since the layout of the interest areas or centres will be transformed as children evolve and become increasingly proficient and ready to take up new challenges. Under-used areas, equipment and material are re-evaluated on a regular basis.

Furniture on wheels, which makes little noise when moved, facilitates the relocation of equipment and materials which may be necessary, for example, to expand the space available for gross motor activities, a contextual activity (such as a celebration to be organized) requiring the addition of work surfaces (easels, tables, etc.) or a relaxation activity for which mats must be laid on the floor, or quite simply at meal times.

**F**

In a family setting, furniture and equipment on wheels that can be stored in closets, stackable containers on movable platforms and shelves with hinges that fold closed like a box may be useful.

**B**

Following a rearrangement of the premises, educators or home childcare workers who have a child with a visual impairment will make a tour of the premises, indicating the new reference points so that the child can find his or her way around easily.

B: Children having special needs.

### ▾ Theme bins, learning kits and mobile kits

In addition to corners, some childcare establishments set up theme bins (e.g.: a collection of seashells with a few books on the subject), learning kits or mobile kits to increase the variety of materials more directly related to certain development spheres (e.g.: language dimension). These different mobile activity centres contribute to more structured adult-child interactions than does a free workshop play context.

### ▾ Solutions to compensate for a lack of space and material

- Plan for more storage spaces when there are expansions;
- Set up a game library, making it possible to have a greater diversity of materials, to manage the lending of group materials and facilitate their disinfection;
- Put together mobile kits or learning kits (e.g.: musical, scientific, reading awareness and dress-up kits) that can be moved from room to room and that can be used by several educators during an activity-project;<sup>72</sup>
- Create multi-thematic tools (thematic suitcases, booklets of children's songs adapted to all ages) that are easy to carry;
- Plan for a rotation of materials to make up for a lack of materials or to avoid cluttering a small area;
- Rotate interest areas;
- Put the emphasis on motor activities in the outdoor play area;
- Have a versatile room that can serve for welcoming children and their departure, for meetings and for gross motor activities, with a sliding door that can divide the room, if necessary;
- Share premises, a motor activity room or a documentation centre with different groups of children;
- Have modular furniture that can be moved easily and that makes little noise. This helps ensure a versatile and diversified layout.

### 7.1.3 Layout of the outdoor play area

The ideal location presents a variety of level variations, textures, materials, colours and shapes (slope, sand, water, tree trunks, cement, flowers, exploration wall,<sup>73</sup> rocks, etc.). Trees and shrubs attract birds and provide shade, a grass-covered area is good for jumping, running and doing somersaults, fun-oriented structures encourage children to climb, slide and take part in balancing activities. The outdoor play area is also suited for symbolic games.

18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

The presence of a small house to play make-believe, a platform to give performances, a place to which rolling toys have access, a water source and a sandbox permits a multitude of role-play activities and stimulates the socialization of children.

An ideal place to take part in large-deployment modeling activities (making of collective murals, banners, totem poles), the outdoor play area is well suited to activities where children "get dirty". Painting on a fence, on big cardboard boxes... the garden hose is never far away to clean up spills. The shed, which is useful for storing tricycles, "infant karts", thematic bins, small swimming pools, etc., can also serve as a support for children's drawing activities.

Good for free play activities and workshop play, the yard can be divided into different areas (gross motor activities, relaxation and calm activities, water and sand, etc.). The yard will also have thematic bins on wheels (e.g.: grocery shopping, carpentry work, construction) from which materials are taken as needed or specific activity bins (sand and water games). Depending on the children's preferences of the moment, the adult can also add various elements (pails, shovels, rakes, moulds, sieves), small water basins with small objects (boats, ladles, tumblers, funnels), little cars, trucks, big boxes in which children can hide, various elements found in nature, etc.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

Groups of objects may be arranged (arrangement of baskets filled with sound-making objects) and inspiration for play activities may be provided using recycled materials (cardboard boxes used as tunnels and that prompt children to explore). Styrofoam mats, ride-on vehicles, balls and slides encourage the sensory-motor development of children.<sup>74</sup>

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

The materials of the various interest areas can be transported in the yard in a wagon pulled by the children.

### ▾ Safety first

The layout of the outdoor play area, while presenting challenges adapted to the development of children, must respect safety rules.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS I

In facilities, to prevent small children from hurting themselves on equipment that is not adapted to their stage of development or from being injured by other children, it is recommended that the outdoor play area for children under 18 months of age be separated from that for children 18 months of age and older.

The presence of a regulatory safety fence, shaded areas (trees, shrubs, shelters, pergola) intended to protect children from over-exposure to the sun, a fence around the water supply point, as well as the absence of toxic plants are some of the safety rules that should be observed.

Outdoor equipment (swings, slides, modular units, etc.) must be solid, durable (resistant to weather conditions) and safe.<sup>75 76</sup> During the cold weather season, this equipment must not be accessible,<sup>77</sup> since the material intended to absorb shocks cannot play its role properly.

Finally, the prevention of accidents requires regular inspections and maintenance of the outdoor play area<sup>78</sup> as well as a prior inspection in the case of activities in a public park. However, it is important to bear in mind that no equipment, however safe it may be, can take the place of proper adult supervision and that the adult's participation in the play activities of children reduces the risk of injuries while enriching their experiences.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.1: Each child is unique

## 7.2 PLAY MATERIALS

The choice of materials found in the various interest areas is made with a view to ensuring the development of the whole child, in such a way as to foster exploration and creation.

### ▾ Materials will be appropriate

Materials must first of all be **safe<sup>79</sup> and in good condition** (there are no parts missing from toys, no missing puzzle pieces, the pages of the books are intact...). Materials having a hazardous structure (e.g.: pointed object, sharp edge, toxic) will be discarded. Consideration will be given to the degree of fragility and the danger of small pieces being swallowed, something which will depend on the age or the stage of development of the children, particularly for materials accessible to children during their free play activities and in multi-age groups.

#### 0-18 MONTHS

Infants often put toys in their mouth. That is why it is important to inspect and wash toys frequently.

Materials will be **suitable for the stage of development** of the children.

#### 0-18 MONTHS

During the first few months, an infant will gradually respond to sound, visual and tactile stimuli. As hearing develops before vision does, sound-making toys (musical mobiles, music boxes, rattles with bells) are the first objects to attract the infant's attention. Afterwards, the infant will try to grab objects within his or her reach. Rattles, brightly coloured toys, grasp toys, press-button toys, discovery maps, toy bars and unbreakable mirrors arouse his or her interest.

It is therefore important to consider the complexity of the structure of the objects (type of materials, shape, format and number of pieces included), the possibilities of manipulating the objects (ease of assembly), the themes that the objects call to mind, and the aesthetic aspect (colour and form).

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS

As soon as a child can grab a small object between the base of his or her thumb and the index finger, he or she can be offered material for drawing or making things (large felt pens or wax crayons, play-dough). There are lists of play materials adapted to the various stages of development of infants (infants immobile on their back, immobile infants who are able to turn over onto their tummy, infants capable of sitting up, crawlers and toddlers – See Appendix 3).

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS B

Some children with a motor impairment will need special materials or technical aides. Most of the time, they will, however, be able to use everyday objects (toys on wheels, magnetic boards, large felt pens, etc.). Overly specialized equipment may occasionally impede their participation in certain activities and their relations with others. Moreover, texturized materials to help “read” with their fingers may be offered to children having a visual impairment, and the presence of visual supports (pictograms, photographs, drawings) will help children with a hearing impairment.

### ▾ Materials will be varied, stimulating and versatile

In order to meet the various needs and respond to the tastes of children and to make sure that they can take part in the activities of their choice, the play materials offered will be varied, versatile and appealing. They will stimulate the different senses of children and offer **multiple possibilities** for manipulation and exploration, allowing children to exercise all their skills and to acquire new knowledge.

Reflecting the **diversity of the realities** (gender-related, family and cultural, special needs), these materials will motivate the child to undertake activities and projects during which he or she makes decisions and resolves problems at his or her level, alone or with others. In addition, the materials will stimulate each dimension of the child’s development.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS B

Some children with impairments require a greater stimulation from their environment to develop to their full potential when it comes to a given dimension of their development. Parents and specialists (speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) may be consulted.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.4: Children learn through play

There are various classifications of games and toys, which refer to the three main fields of the human mind: intelligence, affectivity, sociability. Inspired by Piaget, some classify play materials into four categories, “exercise, symbolic, assembly and rule games” (ESAR),<sup>80</sup> which correspond to an order of acquisition of skills in child development.

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.2: Physical and motor dimension, 4.4: Cognitive dimension, and 4.5: Language dimension

Others talk about games having an experimental, personality-structuring or interpersonal relationship value.<sup>81</sup> Promoting sensory-motor exploration, play materials having an experimental value include all construction games (stackable materials, assembly materials, arts and crafts activities using various materials, and experiences involving natural elements) and all those which stimulate artistic, language, musical and gestural expression (sound-making objects, computer, materials for climbing, for drawing, etc.).

See chap. 4: Development of the Whole Child, sections 4.1: Emotional dimension, and 4.3: Social and moral dimension

Materials having a personality-structuring value promote symbolic play (dolls, disguises, mirrors, etc.), whereas materials having a relationship value allow the child to relate with his or her peers (make-believe, parlour games, learning of instructions, etc.), stimulating the child's behavioural, social, moral and language development.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.3: Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process

Some games or toys combine several values. For example, wooden puzzles in which figures are fitted and which depict children combine an experimentation and relationship value,<sup>82</sup> stimulating the child's motor, cognitive, social and emotional development.

While play materials can stimulate several dimensions of the child's development, a good way of checking if the content of the interest areas promotes comprehensive development consists of making an inventory by taking up each development sphere (see appendices 4 and 5). This exercise allows the educator or home childcare provider to determine if it would be appropriate to complement the existing materials with new objects promoting an under-stimulated dimension of development.



Materials that offer several manipulation and exploration possibilities will be particularly well suited to **stimulating the child's creativity**. Using these materials, the child will invent his or her own game or his or her own materials. These versatile materials are most often non-commercial in nature. Recycled objects (e.g.: plastic pots, cardboard boxes, pieces of fabric) or elements taken from nature (water, sand, tree leaves, stones, seeds, etc.), life-size objects used in everyday life (brush, cushion, coffee-maker, telephone) as well as "universal" toys (dolls, blocks, balls) allow multiple manipulation operations, various games calling on motor skills, and role-playing by children of different ages.

The contribution of parents may be solicited by asking them to provide recycled materials, to make materials or to come up with ideas for materials calling to mind, for example, certain family or cultural customs.

**↘ Materials will be accessible and in sufficient quantity**

To allow children to get organized in an autonomous manner, the adult places the materials at the children's height so that they can see the materials, take them easily, use them autonomously and put them away.

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.5: Cooperation between the childcare personnel or home childcare providers and parents contributes to the harmonious development of the child

See chap. 3: Basic Principles of the Program, section 3.2: Children are the primary agents of their development

**0-18** MONTHS **18-36** MONTHS **3-5** YEARS

In a family setting or in a multi-age group, access to the materials is planned according to the age of the children. For example, a complicated game will not be on the same shelf as games for infants. Materials that include small parts will remain outside the reach of infants.

The **presentation of materials** influences and facilitates the choices that children make. A disorderly presentation is less appealing. Moreover, a child will have difficulty finding specific materials and then organizing a play activity.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention, section 5.2: Planning and organization

**0-18** MONTHS **18-36** MONTHS **3-5** YEARS

The play materials are arranged on low or open shelves or in containers accessible to the children. They are organized in such a way as to suggest games (e.g.: stackable blocks, stuffed animals on a chair, etc.), with a view to stimulating the children's interest.

See chap. 5: Educational Intervention



Children often stimulate one another and imitate their peers. Sometimes, it is enough for one child to begin a construction activity in order for other children, upon seeing him or her, to want to do the same thing. It is important to have sufficient materials and games, especially when they are popular. That way, the childcare establishment will respond to the fields of interest of all children, enable children to make the most choices possible and allow several children to play the same games.

#### ▾ **Materials will be renewed**

Materials will be renewed on a regular basis according to the changing tastes of children. These tastes will evolve at the pace of the children's development. By observing the play activities of children to discover their fields of interest and their skills, educators or home childcare providers will be able to introduce and use new accessories. Using a rotation method to circulate materials between different groups of children may contribute to increasing the diversity of toys and games.

**0-18** MONTHS **18-36** MONTHS **3-5** YEARS **F**

The exchanging of toys between home childcare providers and the borrowing of materials from a toy library will help ensure a good variety of games and activities, while making it possible to save on purchasing costs.

### To delve into this subject further:

- Are the premises where the children find themselves healthy and safe?
- Is the layout of the premises cozy? Do children feel secure?
- Does the layout reflect the tastes of children, cultural and family differences?
- Does it meet the needs of all children, regardless of their age or their special needs?
- How does it encourage the children's autonomy?
- Do the children have a place where they can withdraw from the group?
- Do the children have a personal place?
- What improvements could be made to the layout of the premises?
- Does the layout of the premises permit individual and group activities?
- Does it meet the motor needs of toddlers?
- Is it flexible enough to meet the needs for change associated with the evolving fields of interest of children?
- Based on what criteria are the materials offered to children chosen?
- Are the play materials accessible to all children, whatever their age?
- Are they appropriate for the level of development of the children?
- Do they foster all dimensions of development?
- What improvements could be made to the play materials?

68. R. GUÉNETTE, "Prévention liée à l'aménagement", in *La sécurité des enfants... en services de garde éducatifs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Québec, Les Publications du Québec, 2006, p. 29-60. (Early childhood).
69. A. LAROSE, *op. cit.*, p. 94-115.
70. *Ibid.* p. 107-112.
71. G. DUCLOS, *Quand les tout-petits apprennent à s'estimer: guide théorique et recueil d'activités pour favoriser l'estime de soi des enfants de 3 à 6 ans, à l'intention des éducatrices et éducateurs qui œuvrent en petite enfance*, Montréal, Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 1997, p. 27.
72. D. PELLETIER, *op. cit.*
73. Made up of various materials comprising textures and volumes that can be touched.
74. L. BOURGON and C. LAVALLÉE, *Échelle d'observation de la qualité éducative: les services de garde en pouponnière*, Québec, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, 2004, p. 79.
75. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE L'EMPLOI, DE LA SOLIDARITÉ SOCIALE ET DE LA FAMILLE, *Éléments de base de la norme du CSA: Y a de la sécurité dans l'aire*, Québec, Le Ministère, 2004, 36 p.
76. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE L'EMPLOI, DE LA SOLIDARITÉ SOCIALE ET DE LA FAMILLE, *Y a de la sécurité dans l'aire: Procédure de certification de la conformité à la norme du CSA dans les aires extérieures de jeu des services de garde à l'enfance*, Québec, Le Ministère, 2004, 25 p.
77. QUÉBEC, MINISTÈRE DE LA FAMILLE ET DE L'ENFANCE, *Allons jouer dehors: activités extérieures et aménagement d'une aire de jeu*, Sainte-Foy, Les Publications du Québec, 2003, p. 57.
78. D. FORTIER, *Guide des aires et des appareils de jeu: incluant une grille d'inspection basée sur la norme CAN/CSA-Z614-03*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Sainte-Foy, Direction du développement des individus et des communautés, Unité Sécurité et prévention des traumatismes, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, 2005, 78 p.
79. R. GUÉNETTE, *op. cit.* p. 41-60.
80. D. GARON (in collaboration with R. Filion and R. Chiasson), *Le système ESAR – Guide d'analyse, de classification et d'organisation d'une collection de jeux et jouets*, Montréal/Paris, ASTED/Éditions du cercle de la librairie, 2002, 293 p.
81. A. MICHELET, *Le jeu de l'enfant, progrès et problèmes*, Québec, Organisation mondiale pour l'éducation préscolaire (OMEP), 1999, p. 80. (Taken from M.-R. AUFAUVRE-BOUILLY and G. HENRY [1993], *Aide au jeu des enfants en difficulté*, Neuchâtel (Switzerland), Delachaux et Niestlé, 1993, p. 9-10. [Focales]).
82. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

## 8 Relationship with parents

### *In brief*

Cooperation with parents takes various forms ranging from informal conversations at the start or end of the day to the communication of information. It may also include the involvement of certain parents in the activities of childcare establishments (outings with children, etc.) or in their administration. Finally, in the case of some children having more specific needs, the cooperation may extend to the joint preparation of an intervention plan for the child.

Educators or home childcare providers can also play an active role in supporting the exercise of parenting skills as well as in the equal sharing of this role.

In Chapter Three we saw that the cooperation between educators or home childcare providers contributed to the harmonious development of the child. **Informal conversations** at the start and the end of the day are generally the most natural means for educators, home childcare providers and parents to forge a relationship of trust.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS I

As soon as a child arrives at an early childcare centre, various steps are taken to gain the trust and seek the cooperation of the child's parents: tour of the premises, informal conversation with educators, issuing of an information kit (basic principles, internal management, activity program, the list of the members of the board of directors and the various committees) and other means allowing parents to familiarize themselves with the operation of the childcare establishment and to feel more at ease.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS F

In a family setting, each time that Rachel integrates a new child in the group, she invites the child's parents to convey to her the information that they deem relevant. She clearly presents the services that she offers (internal organization, activity program, schedule, intervention philosophy, etc.) and gives them the name, address and telephone number of the coordinating office of their territory.

Educators can also make available to parents a board, booklet or agenda containing the **daily observations** and where parents can jot down their comments. This is a very useful communication tool, particularly in the case of infants or children who do not spontaneously talk about their day at the childcare establishment. The information conveyed between the various parties will improve the reciprocal knowledge of the child's experience: the child's appetite, the quality of his or her sleep, mood, behaviour, successes, discoveries, etc. The educator will make a point of talking more about the child's progress and new acquisitions rather than his or her tangible achievements, namely place greater emphasis on the "process" followed by the child rather than on the actual "results".

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

Peter was in a rather sullen mood today. He had a runny nose which only got worse as the day progressed. He appeared to be in the initial stages of a cold. As for Nancy, she did not eat much at lunch. She will undoubtedly make up for it this evening!

Eric was particularly flexible: he willingly gave his hand to a friend to go to the park, which is something new for him. As for Susan, she succeeded in putting on her snow pants all by herself!

Another means of developing close cooperation between parents and the childcare establishment consists of **encouraging parents to get involved in childcare establishment activities**: sitting on the board of directors or the advisory committee, being part of various other committees, attending information meetings, supporting home childcare providers when they ask for it or accompanying children during various outings.

0-18 MONTHS 18-36 MONTHS 3-5 YEARS

Marika, the mother of Boris, is not very talkative when she brings her son to the childcare establishment. She is shy and does not speak much English. The educator invites Marika to accompany her during the outing with the children that will be held on the weekend. That way, Marika may feel more trusting and ultimately, Boris will also feel more secure at the childcare establishment.

In the case of children having special needs or who are more vulnerable, the parents and the educators or the home childcare provider can **prepare together the intervention plan** or implement specific measures, with or without the help of health and social service network staff.

18-36 MONTHS B

At 3 years of age, Perry, an only child, is not very talkative and does not form complete sentences. After having Perry undergo a speech therapy evaluation, his mother decides to entrust him to a childcare service in order to stimulate his language abilities more and to help him socialize. She meets with the educator and the speech therapist to determine the measures that will be implemented, both at the childcare establishment and at home, to help Perry to work more on this aspect of his development and to prevent possible difficulties when he reaches school age.

Due to their experience with children, educators or home childcare providers are in a good position to also **support the exercise of parenting skills**, both those of mothers and those of fathers. This support should be offered especially when the parents ask educators or home childcare providers for advice, when parents entrust their first child to them, when the child lives in a more vulnerable setting (poverty, single-parent household, teen mother, etc.) or when the child has special needs.

**To delve into this subject further:**

- *Am I at ease with this part of my role?*
- *How can I describe my relationship with parents?*
- *Is this relationship characterized by respect and openness on the part of both parties?*
- *Who can help me when this cooperation is absent, is less than what it should be or is invasive?*



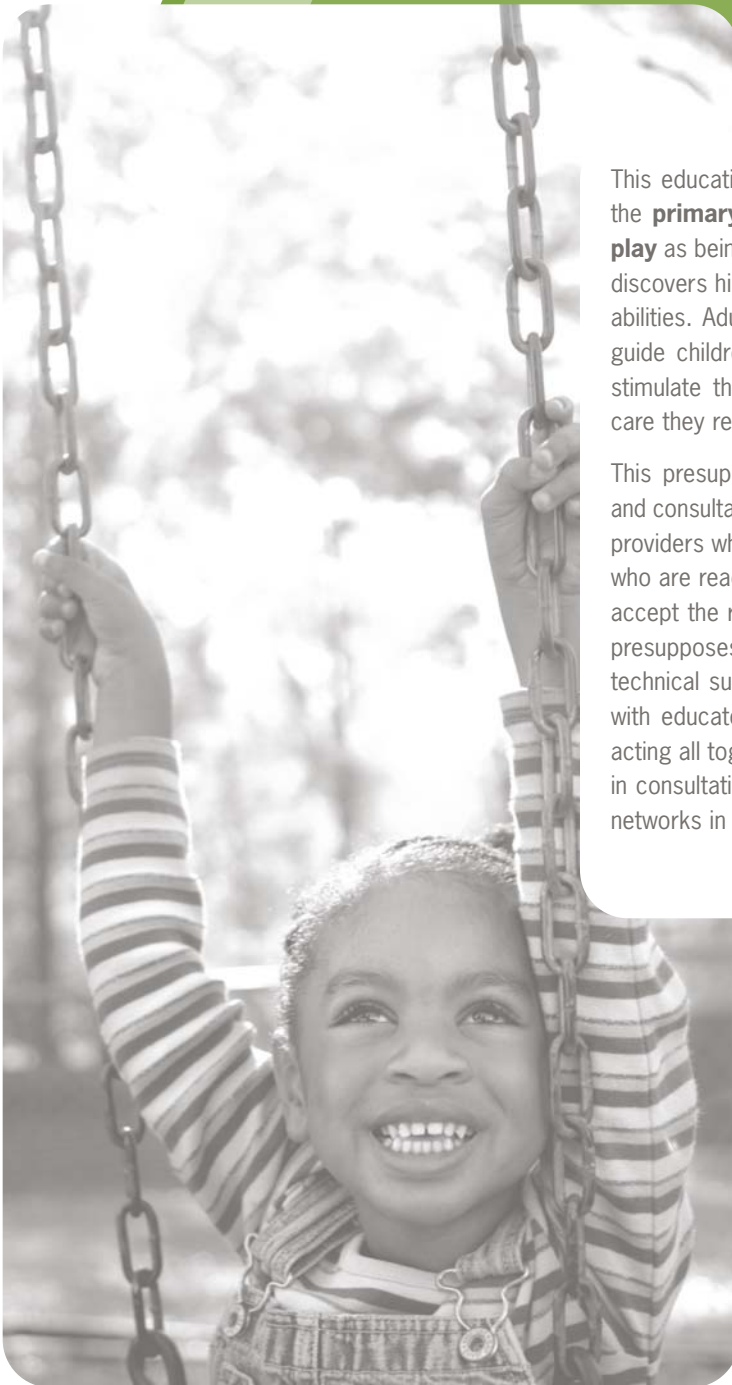
# Conclusion

This educational program considers **the child** as being the **primary architect** of his or her development **and play** as being **the privileged activity** whereby he or she discovers his or her environment and develops his or her abilities. Adults are there to support this exploration, to guide children on the path of their socialization and to stimulate their creativity, while providing them with the care they require, with affection and professionalism.

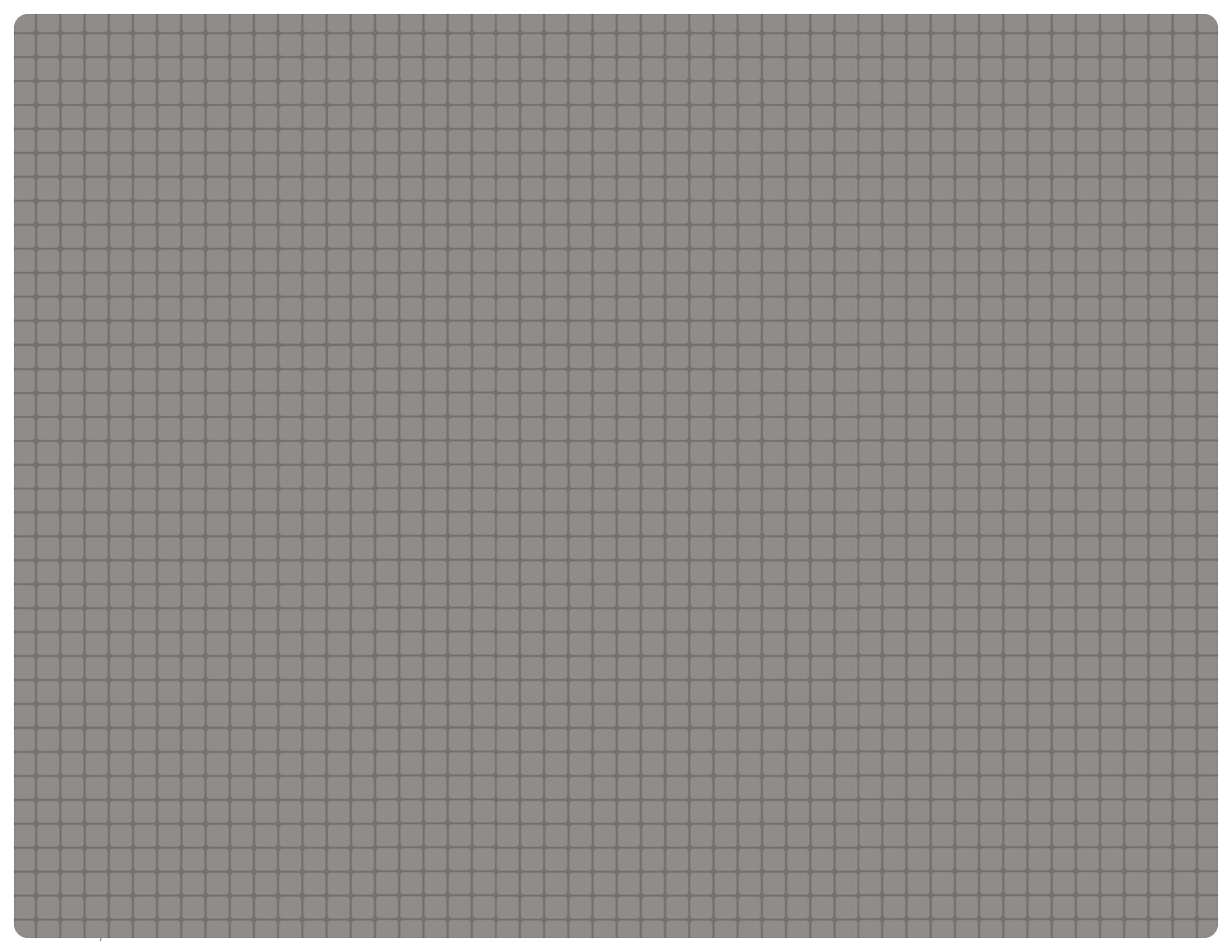
This presupposes educators who are open to dialogue and consultation with colleagues as well as home childcare providers who are willing to work in a network, individuals who are ready to call into question their approach and to accept the requirements that their group has set. It also presupposes directors, managers and educational and technical support staff who are ready to show solidarity with educators and home childcare providers and who, acting all together, work in collaboration with parents and in consultation with partners of the health and education networks in contact with children.

**Educational competence** and **professionalism** are exercised when the management team, educators, home childcare providers, educational support staff, members of the board of directors or the parents' committee and parents work to make the childcare establishment more harmonious and more coherent and are able to bank on good basic training. Childcare establishments are also keenly aware of the importance of promoting the continuous training of their personnel and home childcare providers. The participation of educators or home childcare providers in team meetings, meetings of a professional association, a childcare services group or a discussion or support group can only enhance the quality of services. A good knowledge of the basic principles and theoretical foundations of the program should notably figure among the hiring criteria of childcare establishment personnel. The educational program should also foster the creation of intervention and training tools, in addition to inspiring **the preparation of an educational program and an activity program that are specific to each childcare establishment** and that are based on the establishment's principles and convictions.

Far from providing all the answers and establishing all the parameters, this educational program invites stakeholders to continue their reflection on children and their development as well as on the ways of encouraging and supporting children throughout their stay in childcare establishments. This program is a privileged tool in the initiative to improve quality, an initiative in which the childcare establishment network and its partners are already involved.







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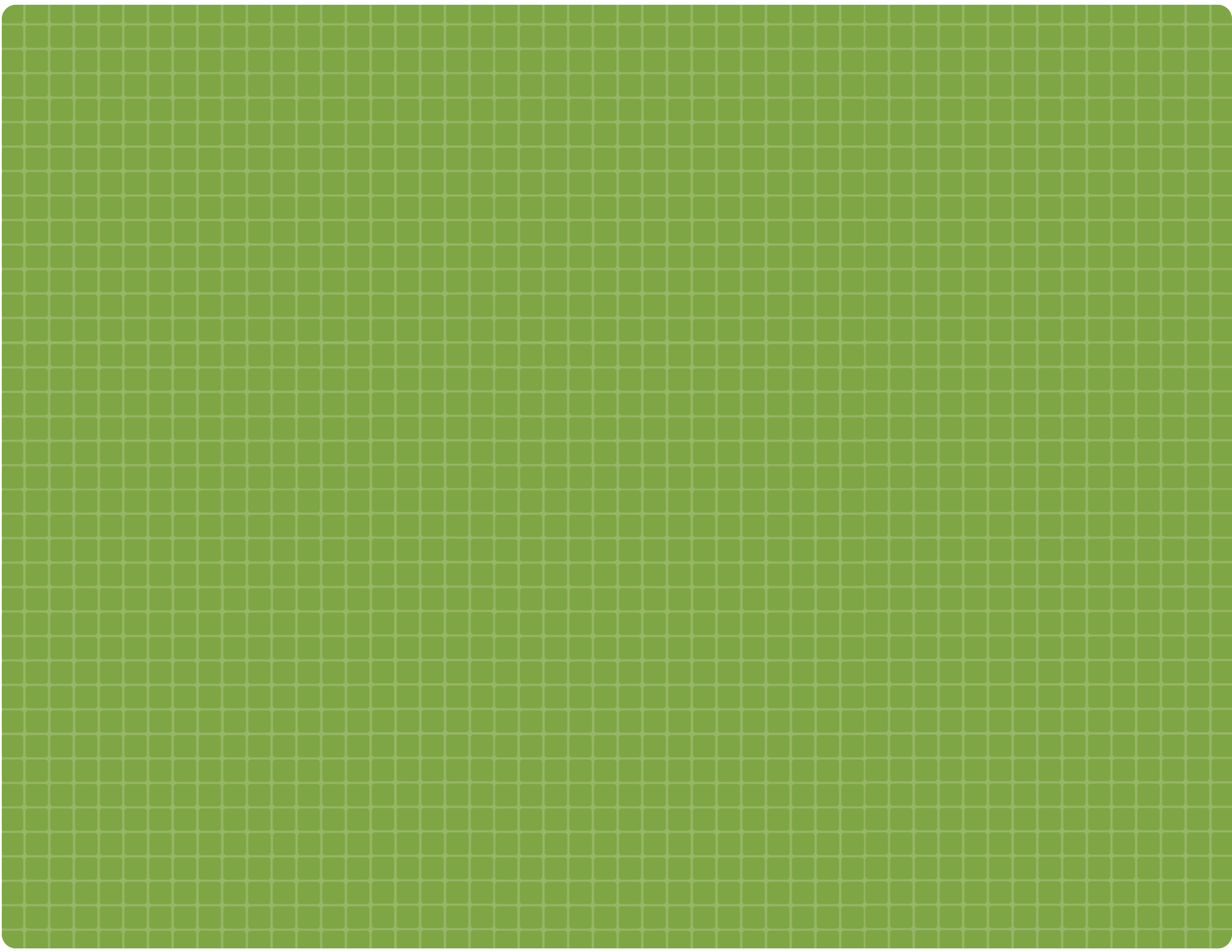
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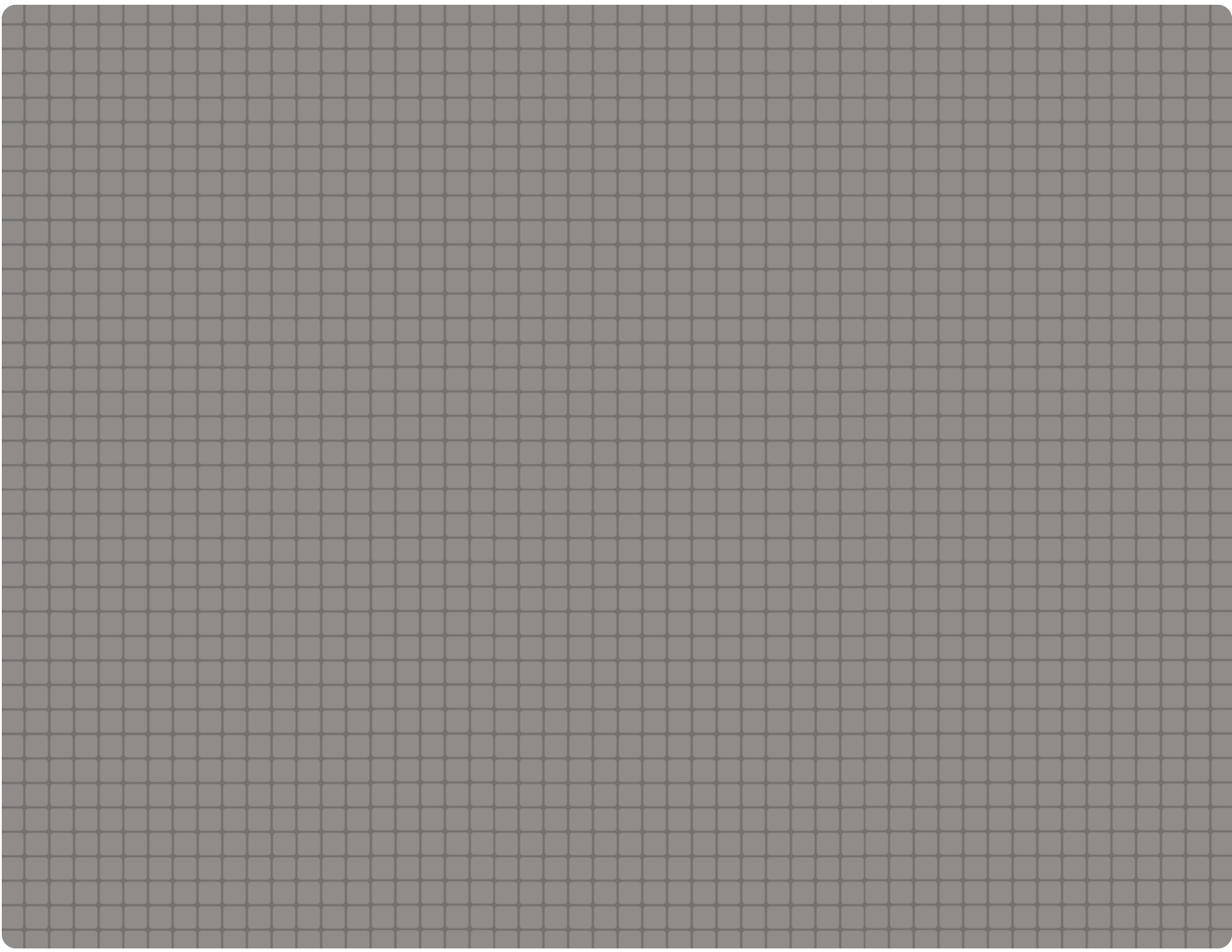
## MAIN INTERNET SITES THAT SHOULD BE CONSULTED

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- Centre d'aide à la petite enfance (CAPE): [www.projetcape.ca](http://www.projetcape.ca)
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- Canadian Council on Learning: [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca)
- Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance: [www.cfe.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.cfe.gouv.qc.ca)
- Conseil québécois des services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance: [www.cqsgee.qc.ca](http://www.cqsgee.qc.ca)
- Le développement de l'enfant: [www.ccdmd.qc.ca/ri/developpement](http://www.ccdmd.qc.ca/ri/developpement). Bank of photographs and video sequences illustrating various concepts related to child development in a childcare context, whether in a facility or a family setting.
- Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport: [www.mels.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca)
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# *Appendices*



## APPENDIX 1

Far from being exhaustive, the following section presents certain acquisitions made by children in each area of their development, according to their age. Because each child is unique, he or she may acquire a specific skill a few months before or after the age mentioned in the chart, without his or her development being compromised. **These data are provided for information purposes only and must not be considered objectives to be attained.** For more information, readers should consult specialized documents in this field.

**TABLE 1**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 0 AND 6 MONTHS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child progressively creates <b>attachment ties</b> with his or her parents.</p> <p>The child expresses various <b>emotions</b> (notably sadness, anger, distress, joy and enthusiasm).</p> <p>The child cries to get attention when he or she <b>needs</b> something.</p> <p>The child <b>calms down</b> when a person holds him or her.</p> <p>The child sometimes shows his or her <b>frustration</b> (screams, cries) when he or she does not succeed in doing something (e.g.: reaching a toy) or when the child's needs are not satisfied rapidly.</p>	<p><b>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child <b>turns his or her head</b> towards a noise or a voice.</p> <p>When lying on his or her tummy, the child <b>raises his or her head and chest</b> resting on his or her forearms and then hands.</p> <p>The child <b>rolls from his or her stomach onto his or her back</b>.</p> <p>The child manages to stay <b>seated</b> but needs to be supported in order not to fall.</p> <p><b>FINE MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child uses his or her entire hand to grasp an object (<b>palmar prehension</b>).</p> <p>The child tries to <b>grab objects</b> beyond his or her reach.</p> <p>The child <b>shakes</b> a rattle.</p> <p>The child <b>brings objects to his or her mouth</b>.</p>	<p>The child <b>recognizes</b> the voice, face and smell of his or her mother, then those of the other persons who are familiar to the child.</p> <p>The child is <b>attracted by faces</b> and different facial expressions.</p> <p>Towards the age of six weeks, the child gives his or her <b>first "social smile"</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>smiles, coos and breaks out laughing</b>, especially if someone is speaking to or smiling at him or her.</p> <p>The child <b>likes to look at and touch the face</b> of people who are familiar to him or her.</p> <p>The child is interested in the people around him or her: the child <b>follows them with his or her eyes</b> and shows his or her pleasure by cooing and wriggling about.</p> <p>The child tries to <b>imitate</b> certain gestures or facial expressions.</p>	<p>The child spends a great deal of time <b>examining</b> his or her fingers and hands as well as looking at different objects.</p> <p>The child shows a clear <b>preference for objects with bright or contrasting colours</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>distinguishes between day and night</b>.</p> <p>The child sometimes shows a <b>preference for a specific object</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>uses several of his or her senses at the same time</b> and he or she coordinates several gestures to discover the objects (the child looks, manipulates and puts the object in his or her mouth, etc.).</p>	<p>The child <b>coos</b> (uttering mainly vowels like a or e).</p> <p>The child makes his or her <b>first "Ah goo"</b> sounds.</p> <p>The child expresses his or her needs mainly by <b>crying and screaming</b> and as the months pass these sounds will become <b>increasingly differentiated</b>.</p> <p>The child expresses his or her emotions by <b>gestures and facial expressions</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>listens when he or she is talked to</b>: he or she stops moving and stares at the person talking (even more so if it is the child's mother).</p>

**TABLE 2**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 6 AND 12 MONTHS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child <b>consolidates his/her attachment ties</b> with his or her parents.</p> <p>The child reacts by crying when separated from his or her parents and particularly from his or her mother (<b>separation anxiety</b>).</p> <p>The child feels insecure when he or she is confronted with strangers (<b>strangers' anxiety</b>) or in places he or she does not know. The child then seeks comfort from the people he or she knows well.</p> <p>When one of the child's parents leaves the room, he or she <b>looks</b> for the parent intensely and when the parent comes back <b>greet</b>s him or her joyfully.</p> <p><b>Rituals and routines</b> give the child a feeling of security.</p> <p>The child becomes emotionally attached to a specific object: blanket, plush toy, etc. (<b>transitional object</b>).</p> <p>The child is <b>sensitive to our mood</b> and cries when we raise our voices.</p> <p>The child <b>laughs</b> when he or she succeeds in doing something.</p>	<p><b>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS</b> Using his or her hands, the child <b>puts his or her feet in his or her mouth</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>rolls over from his or her back onto his or her stomach</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>sits down on his or her own</b> and knows how to stop from falling.</p> <p>The child <b>moves around by crawling or on all fours</b>.</p> <p>The child pulls him or herself <b>up</b> by holding onto furniture, takes a few side steps and then sits down again.</p> <p>The child <b>takes a few steps</b> when he or she is held.</p> <p><b>FINE MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child stacks <b>two blocks</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>holds his or her bottle on his or her own</b>.</p> <p>The child holds an object in each hand simultaneously.</p> <p>The child <b>transfers an object</b> from one hand to the other.</p> <p>The child <b>picks up small objects with his or her thumb and index finger</b> allowing the child to eat some types of food on his or her own.</p>	<p>The child begins to <b>differentiate him or herself from others</b> and perceives him or herself as a separate person.</p> <p>The child <b>reacts differently</b> depending on whether he or she <b>knows or does not know</b> the person in his or her presence.</p> <p>The child often <b>tries to take the toys</b> from his or her playmates' hands.</p> <p>The child <b>deciphers emotions</b> (joy, anger, etc.) by observing facial expressions on the faces of people around him or her.</p> <p>The child can <b>voluntarily offer an object</b> to another person.</p> <p>The child <b>claps his or her hands to say "congratulations!"</b></p> <p>The child actively takes part in <b>interactive games</b> like "peek-a-boo!"</p> <p>The child likes to <b>imitate</b> the facial expressions and certain gestures of adults.</p>	<p>The child <b>discovers objects' characteristics</b> (shape, texture) by holding them and putting them in his or her mouth.</p> <p>The child <b>focuses his or her attention</b> and likes to observe small objects.</p> <p>The child's behaviour has a specific <b>purpose</b> (for example, grabbing an object).</p> <p>The child understands that an action is followed by a reaction (<b>cause-effect relation</b>); for example, he or she shakes a rattle to hear a noise.</p> <p>The child understands when he or she is told to put it "<b>in</b>".</p> <p>The child likes to <b>look at the pictures</b> of a book.</p> <p>The child <b>looks for and finds an object</b> that has been hidden in front of him or her.</p> <p>The child recognizes objects and places that are familiar to him or her.</p> <p>The child understands that an object still exists even when he or she no longer sees it (<b>object permanence</b>).</p>	<p>The child <b>bab</b>bles (combinations of vowels and consonants: "mama", "dada", etc.) and imitates certain sounds that he or she hears.</p> <p>The child pronounces his or her <b>first words</b>, often "daddy" and "mommy".</p> <p>The child "<b>calls</b>" by uttering different sounds when he or she wants to get attention or to ask for help.</p> <p>The child becomes aware that words have meaning.</p> <p>The child <b>understands a few words</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>recognizes the word "no"</b> and shakes his or her head when he or she hears "no".</p> <p>The child <b>communicates</b> a lot with <b>gestures</b> (points at the objects that he or she wants, lifts his or her arms to indicate that he or she wants to be picked up).</p> <p>The child <b>turns his or her head when called by his or her first name</b>.</p>

**TABLE 3**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 12 AND 18 MONTHS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child consolidates his or her attachment ties with his or her parents and <b>creates new ties with other attachment figures</b>.</p> <p>The child is <b>affectionate</b> and likes to be held.</p> <p>The child <b>likes to be the centre of attention</b> and may show his or her discontent when the parents are busy with a sibling.</p> <p>The child <b>shows his or her frustration</b> when he or she doesn't get what he or she wants.</p> <p>The child <b>seeks to be comforted</b> when he or she is sad.</p> <p>The child sometimes manages <b>to calm down</b> on his or her own or with a transitional object.</p> <p>The child <b>moves further away</b> from his or her parents to explore the environment.</p> <p>The child expresses his or her <b>likes and dislikes</b>.</p> <p>The child has more <b>self-confidence</b>.</p>	<p>The child's <b>need of sleep</b> decreases progressively.</p> <p>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS The child <b>walks</b> without help.</p> <p>The child is capable of <b>squatting and getting up</b> while maintaining his or her balance.</p> <p>The child <b>runs</b> with his or her arms folded at 90° and facing upwards.</p> <p>The child <b>sits on a small chair</b> without assistance.</p> <p>The child likes <b>climbing</b> everywhere.</p> <p>The child likes <b>pushing and pulling</b> various objects.</p> <p>The child <b>climbs stairs</b> by holding onto the handrail and placing both feet on each step but <b>comes down</b> backwards on all fours.</p> <p>FINE MOTOR SKILLS The child stacks up to <b>four blocks</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>uses a spoon</b> to eat but makes a mess.</p> <p>The child has fun <b>filling up and emptying</b> containers.</p> <p>The child <b>turns several pages of a book</b> at a time.</p>	<p>The child <b>likes to interact</b> with people he or she knows.</p> <p>The child <b>doesn't like it when limits are imposed</b> but agrees to comply especially when he or she is offered an alternative.</p> <p>The child starts to <b>understand jokes</b> (for example, the child breaks out laughing if someone makes faces at him or her).</p> <p>The child <b>likes to make people laugh</b>.</p> <p>The child likes the company of other children but does not play with them yet (<b>parallel games</b>).</p> <p>The child likes <b>to observe and imitate</b> other children.</p>	<p>The child <b>learns</b> a great deal <b>through trial and error</b>.</p> <p>The child starts to grasp the <b>functions associated with objects</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>recognizes him or herself</b> when looking in a mirror.</p> <p>The child develops certain <b>problem-solving skills</b>, like pulling on a string to get to an object beyond his or her reach.</p> <p>The child is capable of <b>pointing at different parts</b> of his or her face and body.</p> <p>The child manages to <b>fit</b> the pieces into a puzzle if they have big knobs.</p> <p>The child <b>recognizes</b> and points to <b>people he or she knows</b> on a <b>photograph</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>likes to be shown pictures</b> in a book.</p> <p><b>Object permanence</b> is acquired.</p>	<p>The child <b>understands</b> a wide variety of words.</p> <p>The child <b>says a few words</b>, more often than not the names of familiar objects.</p> <p>The child <b>often says "no!"</b> while shaking his or her head.</p> <p>The child <b>imitates</b> the sounds that some animals make.</p> <p>The child <b>points</b> at objects in a picture book, then learns <b>their names</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>associates a word with a gesture</b> to express his or her desire (for example, saying "ball" while pointing at it).</p> <p>The child <b>understands a simple question which is not</b> accompanied by a <b>gesture</b> (for example: "Do you want milk?").</p> <p>The child <b>understands a simple instruction</b> like "Don't touch!", "Say Bye-Bye!" or "Come, time for your bath!".</p>



**TABLE 4**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 18 AND 24 MONTHS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child <b>reacts less</b> intensely <b>when his or her parents leave</b>, provided that he or she feels secure with the persons who are taking care of him or her (capable of relying on other attachment figures).</p> <p>The child swings between his or her <b>desire for autonomy</b> and need of others.</p> <p>The child <b>asserts him or herself more</b> (for example, the child voices his or her disagreement by saying “No!”).</p> <p>The child sometimes has <b>temper tantrums</b> that he or she has trouble controlling.</p>	<p><b>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child <b>gets up on a chair</b> and gets down without help.</p> <p>The child learns progressively to <b>go down the stairs</b> by holding onto the handrail and by placing <b>both feet on each step</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>throws</b> the ball or <b>kicks</b> it but his or her balance is shaky.</p> <p><b>FINE MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child builds a tower with <b>six blocks</b>.</p> <p>The child uses both hands for different purposes: one to <b>stabilize</b> an object and the other to <b>manipulate it</b>.</p> <p>The child is able to <b>unscrew</b> a lid.</p> <p>The child can <b>hold a glass with only one hand</b>.</p> <p>The child uses both hands equally well.</p> <p>The child manages to <b>put his or her shoes</b> on, without doing up the laces, but not always on the right foot.</p> <p>The child <b>copies a dash</b>.</p>	<p>The child <b>needs</b> to be supervised and <b>limitations have to be imposed</b> for he or she is unaware of the dangers present in his or her environment and the child has difficulties controlling all of his or her desires and emotions.</p> <p>The child <b>likes to participate in household chores</b> (sweeping or passing the vacuum, for example).</p> <p>The child appreciates the company of other children and interacts more often with them, even if they still don’t play together (<b>parallel games</b>).</p> <p>The child sometimes prefers the company of one child in particular.</p> <p>The child <b>doesn’t share</b> his or her toys readily.</p> <p>The child <b>reacts</b> when another child feels sad (for example, goes to the other child, touches him or her and makes a face).</p>	<p>The child is able to represent objects or persons by means of an internal image (<b>symbolic thought</b>). For example, when the educator talks to the child about his or her mom, the child forms a mental picture of her.</p> <p>The child starts to play <b>make-believe games</b> (for example, giving the bottle to his or her doll).</p> <p>The child likes to <b>imitate</b> his or her parents or other children.</p> <p>The child acquires the ability to imitate without the presence of a model (<b>deferred imitation</b>).</p> <p>The child can <b>concentrate a few minutes</b> on the same task.</p> <p>The child places in the right places simple geometrical shapes in a toy designed for this purpose.</p> <p>The child <b>fits stacking objects</b> or containers of different sizes <b>into each other</b>.</p> <p>The child can <b>associate a real object with a picture</b>.</p>	<p>The child says about <b>twenty words</b>.</p> <p>The child likes to <b>repeat</b> new words or new expressions.</p> <p>The child uses <b>a single word to describe several realities</b> (for example, “apple” for all fruit).</p> <p>The child uses his or her <b>first “word-sentences”</b>, namely a word which for the child is the equivalent of a sentence (for example, “milk” for “I want milk”).</p> <p>The child likes to imitate the <b>sounds that animals make</b>.</p> <p>The child says his or her <b>first name</b> and calls people he or she knows by their first name.</p> <p>At around 24 months, the child utters his or her <b>first pre-sentences</b>, namely an association of two words (“Mom gone”).</p> <p>The child starts asking <b>questions</b> like “where mom?”.</p> <p>The child <b>sings</b> bits of songs.</p>

**TABLE 5**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 2 AND 3 YEARS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child is in the middle of the <b>“no” phase</b> and often rebels against adults’ requests.</p> <p>The child often wants <b>to do things on his or her own</b>; it is the “let me do it” phase.</p> <p>The child doesn’t like waiting and <b>wants everything “right away”</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>feels new emotions</b>: feeling proud, ill at ease, ashamed, etc.</p> <p>The child can <b>name</b> the emotions that he or she feels (for example “I am angry”) and recognizes the emotions of others.</p> <p>The child <b>gets angry</b> if people don’t understand what he or she means.</p> <p>The child sometimes <b>manages to control his or her anger</b>, but not always.</p> <p>The child is <b>more perseverant</b> when confronted with a difficulty.</p> <p>The child develops certain <b>fears</b>, such as fear of the dark or fear of monsters.</p> <p>The child likes it when <b>routines</b> are respected.</p>	<p>The child is <b>toilet-trained during the day</b>.</p> <p>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS The child <b>jumps</b> up and down on the spot.</p> <p>The child can <b>throw</b> a ball with his or her hands and <b>catch</b> it (sometimes) with his or her body.</p> <p>The child <b>is able to ride</b> a tricycle.</p> <p>FINE MOTOR SKILLS The child uses one of his or her hands more.</p> <p>The child stacks up to <b>ten blocks</b>.</p> <p>The child snips paper with <b>scissors</b> using both hands.</p> <p>The child <b>turns the pages of a book</b> one at a time.</p> <p>The child learns to <b>get dressed and undressed</b> (with the help of an adult).</p> <p>The child eats with a <b>fork</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>drinks from a cup</b> without making a mess.</p> <p>The child draws his or her <b>first circles</b>.</p>	<p>The child understands the notion of property and becomes <b>possessive</b> (“It’s mine”).</p> <p>The child interacts a lot with other children but often <b>prefers to play with a child of the same gender</b>.</p> <p>The child develops his or her <b>first friendships</b> even if they are sometimes unstable.</p> <p>The child <b>sometimes</b> expresses his or her disagreement by <b>biting or kicking</b> other children.</p> <p>The child learns a few <b>social codes</b>: to say hello, thanks, etc.</p> <p>The child submits to certain <b>behaviour rules</b> (for example, not running in the hall, putting away his or her toys, etc.).</p> <p>The child likes <b>starting</b> certain activities and also participating in activities suggested by others.</p> <p>The child may be annoying or fool around when he or she <b>seeks attention</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>likes helping out</b> a bit.</p>	<p>The child can <b>sort or group</b> objects according to their shape, size or colour.</p> <p>The child finishes his or her <b>first puzzles</b> of six or eight pieces.</p> <p>The child can name several parts of his or her body (but not yet his or her joints).</p> <p>The child knows his or her full <b>name, age</b> as well as <b>gender</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>counts</b> up to 5 but cannot count more than two objects placed in front of him or her.</p> <p>The child grasps <b>the notion of quantity</b> and is able to differentiate between one and several objects.</p> <p>The child understands the <b>difference</b> between <b>“small”</b> and <b>“big”</b>.</p> <p>The child starts to grasp <b>concepts associated with time</b> (soon, a long time, before, after, etc.).</p> <p>The child likes to play <b>make-believe</b> games in a group.</p>	<p>The child has a vocabulary of about <b>450 words</b>.</p> <p>The child often <b>talks to himself mainly</b> when he or she plays.</p> <p>The child starts to build <b>complete sentences</b> (subject, verb, complement), for example: “Mom went work”.</p> <p>The child <b>talks about him or herself in the third person</b> using his or her first name and uses a few pronouns: me, you, etc.</p> <p>The child starts building <b>negative sentences</b> (“I don’t want”).</p> <p>The child <b>understands</b> a sentence with <b>two simple instructions</b>.</p> <p>The child often asks <b>“What is it?”</b>.</p> <p>The child starts <b>using the plural</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>sings</b> a few songs.</p> <p>The child <b>likes to be told stories</b> accompanied with pictures.</p>

**TABLE 6**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 3 AND 4 YEARS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child <b>separates easily</b> from his or her parents.</p> <p>If the environment is favourable, the child develops a <b>positive self-esteem</b>, he or she has the feeling of being a good person and of being important in the eyes of others.</p> <p>The child <b>expresses well what he or she feels</b>.</p> <p>The child begins to <b>control his or her anger</b> and tries to express it verbally.</p> <p>The child occasionally has <b>nightmares</b>.</p> <p>The child shows a <b>particular interest in the parent of the opposite sex</b>.</p>	<p>The child is <b>toilet-trained both day and night</b>.</p> <p>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS The child <b>climbs up and goes down the stairs</b> by placing <b>only one foot on each step</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>rides his or her tricycle</b> well and avoids obstacles.</p> <p>The child <b>catches a ball</b> with his or her arms.</p> <p>The child <b>kicks a ball</b> that is in motion.</p> <p>FINE MOTOR SKILLS The child <b>gets dressed and undressed almost unassisted</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>screws on and unscrews</b> a lid.</p> <p>The child holds a <b>pencil</b> between his or her thumb, index finger and middle finger.</p> <p>The child holds <b>scissors</b> with only one hand.</p> <p>The child makes balls and streamers with <b>play-dough</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>copies a cross and a square</b>.</p> <p>The child draws <b>tadpole characters</b>.</p>	<p>The child submits more to <b>parental authority</b>.</p> <p>The child seeks <b>adult approval</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>shares</b> his or her toys <b>more readily</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>especially likes the company of other children</b> but the presence of an adult is often necessary to manage conflicts.</p> <p>The child <b>shows empathy</b> when another child is sad and tries to help this other child.</p> <p>The child understands the reason why something is forbidden.</p> <p>The child proposes <b>structured activities</b> to the other children: "Do you want to play concentration with me?".</p> <p>The child <b>participates in the structured activities</b> organized by his or her playmates.</p> <p>The child is able to <b>respect the rules of a group game</b> for a short period of time.</p> <p>The child <b>asks permission</b> before doing or using something.</p>	<p>The child can <b>concentrate</b> longer on the same game.</p> <p>The child shows <b>creativity</b> in his or her make-believe games: one object can represent several other objects.</p> <p>The child can <b>sort</b> objects according to various characteristics, but also according to their use.</p> <p>The child <b>counts up to about 10</b>, but cannot count more than three to six objects placed in front of him or her.</p> <p>The child can recognize and name certain <b>geometrical shapes</b>.</p> <p>The child understands the meaning of <b>"the opposite of"</b>.</p> <p>The child has an ever better understanding of <b>the concepts associated with time</b> (yesterday, tomorrow, morning, afternoon, evening, etc.).</p> <p>The child understands certain <b>concepts of position</b> (in front of, behind, etc.) <b>and of measurement</b> (weight, length, etc.).</p> <p>The child starts to <b>draw real objects</b> even though they are often unrecognizable.</p>	<p>The child has a vocabulary of about <b>1000 words</b>.</p> <p>The child builds <b>5-word sentences</b>.</p> <p>The child's language is flowing and he or she has real <b>conversations</b> with his or her playmates.</p> <p>The child understands a sentence with <b>three simple instructions</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>asks many questions</b>: "Where? How? What...? Why?", etc.</p> <p>The child is able to <b>express his or her needs clearly</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>recites nursery rhymes</b> and knows several songs.</p> <p>The child uses different characteristics to <b>describe him or herself</b>.</p>

**TABLE 7**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 4 AND 5 YEARS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child <b>overcomes his or her fears and frustrations</b> through make-believe games.</p> <p>The child <b>expresses his or her anger through words</b> and much less through actions.</p> <p>The child <b>tolerates failure and frustration better</b>.</p> <p>The child can <b>talk about what he or she felt</b> during a past event.</p> <p>The child <b>better tolerates having to wait</b> a bit before his or her needs are met.</p>	<p>The child requires ever <b>less sleep during the day</b>.</p> <p>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS The child switches from the tricycle to the bicycle (<b>with two training wheels</b>).</p> <p>The child <b>throws a ball</b> with accuracy and <b>catches it</b> with his or her arms folded.</p> <p>The child <b>catches a ball</b> with his or her hands.</p> <p>The child can learn <b>basic swimming techniques</b>.</p> <p>FINE MOTOR SKILLS The child is <b>lateralized</b> (left-handed or right-handed).</p> <p>The child reproduces an object or an animal using play-dough.</p> <p>The child <b>cuts out a circle</b>.</p> <p>The child's <b>drawings are recognizable</b> and the characters are more detailed.</p> <p>The child <b>copies letters and numbers</b>.</p> <p>The child can <b>attach his or her buttons</b> if he or she sees them.</p>	<p>The child likes to do group activities and <b>cooperates</b> well.</p> <p>The child appreciates <b>parlour games</b> with simple rules (lottery games, concentration, dominos).</p> <p>The child is able to <b>wait for his or her turn</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>has a "best friend"</b> and can name the children that he or she considers friends.</p> <p>The child <b>shares</b> his or her toys spontaneously.</p> <p>The child is capable of <b>resolving his or her quarrels</b> with other children <b>verbally</b>.</p> <p>The child agrees to make <b>compromises</b>.</p> <p>If the child sees another child in need, he or she spontaneously offers to <b>help this other child out</b>.</p> <p>The child appreciates being assigned <b>responsibilities</b> within the group.</p> <p>The child starts to exercise <b>self-discipline</b> (follows instructions on his or her own).</p> <p>The child appreciates it when <b>adults explain why they forbid things</b>.</p>	<p>The child understands the positions "<b>above</b>" and "<b>below</b>" as well as the terms "<b>first</b>" and "<b>last</b>".</p> <p>The child understands the concepts of "<b>more</b>" and "<b>less</b>", which sets the basis for understanding addition and subtraction.</p> <p>The child grasps the concepts of "<b>same</b>" and "<b>different</b>" (the child starts by grouping objects that are the same and then finds those that are different).</p> <p>The child begins to understand the difference <b>between animate and inanimate objects</b>.</p> <p>The child begins to understand the <b>difference between real and imaginary</b>.</p> <p>The child can <b>remember events from the past</b>.</p> <p>The child begins to understand <b>notions related to duration</b> (a minute lasts less time than an hour).</p> <p>The child distinguishes the four <b>seasons</b>.</p> <p>The child is able to <b>concentrate long enough</b> to complete the task.</p>	<p>The child has a vocabulary of about <b>1500 words</b>.</p> <p>The child is very <b>curious</b> and often asks "<b>why</b>".</p> <p>The child uses <b>the past, present and future tenses</b>.</p> <p>The child makes <b>few syntax mistakes</b> but may have difficulty pronouncing some words.</p> <p>The child can <b>relate</b> various events <b>in the right order</b>.</p> <p>The child has <b>a fertile imagination</b> and tells stories in which he or she mixes reality and imagination.</p> <p>The child likes to <b>create</b> new words and to invent absurd rhymes.</p> <p>The child can name <b>opposites</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>is interested in the words</b> found in story books.</p> <p>The child listens to <b>a story</b> attentively, even when there are no pictures.</p>

**TABLE 8**  
**EXAMPLES OF ACQUISITIONS BETWEEN 5 AND 6 YEARS OF AGE**

Emotional dimension	Physical and motor dimension	Social and moral dimension	Cognitive dimension	Language dimension
<p>The child <b>controls his or her emotions</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>clearly expresses his or her needs</b> and finds ways to fulfill them on his or her own.</p> <p>The child is increasingly capable of <b>making choices</b> and <b>taking up challenges</b>.</p> <p>The child perceives him or herself as a <b>unique human being</b>. The child knows and shares his or her tastes and interests.</p> <p>The child is more aware of his or her <b>strengths and weaknesses</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>identifies him or herself with the parent of the same sex</b> and tries to imitate this parent's actions.</p>	<p><b>GROSS MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child <b>rides a bicycle</b> without training wheels.</p> <p>The child <b>runs</b> with ease.</p> <p>The child learns <b>rope skipping</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>dribbles the ball</b> with one hand but lacks accuracy.</p> <p><b>FINE MOTOR SKILLS</b> The child <b>cuts out</b> geometrical shapes having angles (e.g. square, rectangle, etc.).</p> <p>The child <b>sews</b> with a big needle.</p> <p>The child <b>gets dressed and undressed</b> without assistance.</p> <p>The child <b>copies a rectangle and a triangle</b>.</p> <p>The child learns to <b>write his or her name</b>.</p> <p>The child succeeds in <b>making knots and bows</b> (e.g. shoe laces).</p>	<p>The child likes <b>life in a group</b> and his or her playmates are very important to him or her.</p> <p>The child consolidates his or her <b>social skills</b>: respect, sharing, polite expressions, etc.</p> <p>The child <b>shows more consideration for the interests and needs of others</b>.</p> <p>The child occasionally <b>offers his or her help</b> to the other children, especially the youngest ones.</p> <p>The child begins to perceive what is <b>fair</b> or unfair.</p> <p>The child <b>assimilates</b> the rules of life and safety rules necessary for the harmonious operation of the group.</p> <p>The child is able to <b>pass judgment</b> on his or her actions.</p> <p>The child identifies with his or her cultural environment.</p>	<p>The child <b>counts up to about 30</b>, but cannot count more than 10 objects placed in front of him or her.</p> <p>The child is capable of <b>generalizing and making deductions</b>.</p> <p>The child understands <b>gender consistency</b> (male/female).</p> <p>The child acquires <b>new concepts associated with time</b> (days of the week, holidays, etc.) <b>space</b> (near, far, beside, etc.) <b>quantities</b> (as much as, more than, etc.).</p> <p>The child can tell you his or her <b>address</b> and <b>telephone number</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>perseveres</b> in a task even if the result is not immediate.</p> <p>The child <b>differentiates his or her right hand from the left</b>.</p>	<p>The child has a vocabulary of about <b>2000 words</b>.</p> <p>The child converses easily and uses a <b>varied vocabulary</b>.</p> <p>The child still has problems with <b>irregular verbs</b>: "they feelled".</p> <p>The child is capable of <b>expressing his or her tastes</b>, interests and emotions in different ways.</p> <p>The child <b>expresses his or her ideas</b> and explains them.</p> <p>The child <b>tells</b> the adults around him or her <b>about his or her discoveries</b>.</p> <p>The child <b>relates stories</b> that he or she has already heard.</p> <p>The child is more inclined <b>to listen</b> to what others have to say.</p> <p>The child can list <b>the purposes of objects</b> ("A pen is for writing").</p> <p>The child can say what <b>material the objects are made of</b> ("This plate is made of plastic").</p>

Sources: BEE, H., and D. BOYD, *Les âges de la vie: psychologie du développement humain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Saint-Laurent, Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique, 2003, 494 p.  
 BERNIER, N., *La grille Ballon: Grille d'observation du développement de l'enfant*, Rimouski, Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux du Bas-Saint-Laurent, 2001, 89 p.  
 FERLAND, F., *Le développement de l'enfant au quotidien: du berceau à l'école primaire*, Montréal, Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 2004, 234 p.

## APPENDIX 2

### EXAMPLES OF THEMES FOR INTEREST AREAS, “GAME CORNERS” OR GROUPS OF MATERIAL

(TO BE ADAPTED ACCORDING TO THE AGE)

#### Relaxation

Cozy and peaceful corner to relax located in a quiet area, preferably away from the main activity area, to which the child can withdraw and observe his or her peers; use of soft comfortable fabrics which are inviting and which absorb noise: mats, blankets, cushions, pillows, mattress, futon, psychological division such as a platform covered with cushions with Velcro strips.

#### Reading

Comfortable spot which promotes relaxation; holds reading and writing materials and sometimes audiovisual materials for individual use, the computer and quiet individual games (e.g.: puzzle); this area can serve as a consultation and meeting place at certain times.

#### Modelling

Area for arts and crafts and for painting (near a sink); can also be used for sand and water games.

#### Music

Area where children can listen to and record sounds (empty audiocassettes for recording voices), make music and sounds (musical instruments), dance and sing\*: these activities can be done in a different room (psychomotility room).

\* A. DAVIES, “L’enseignement de la musique: Un cadeau pour les enfants et les éducatrices”, *Interaction*, vol. 18, n° 4, 2005, p. 15-16.

#### Construction

Blocks of various sizes and shapes (LEGO, shapes that fit into one another or that can be stacked, etc.).

#### Role-play or symbolic play

Dolls, stuffed animal toys, dinner set, garage, mechanic’s equipment, dress-up clothes, toy house, toy appliances, toys, etc.

#### Detailed examples of interest areas and their contents may also be found in:

GARIÉPY, L. *Jouer, c’est magique: Programme favorisant le développement global des enfants*, Volume 1, Sainte-Foy, Les Publications du Québec, 1998, p. 67-71.

HOHMANN, M., et al. “Aménager et équiper les divers coins d’activités”, chapter 5, point 5.2.1 of *Partager le plaisir d’apprendre: guide d’intervention éducative au préscolaire*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2000, p. 113-130.

POST, J., et al. *Prendre plaisir à découvrir: guide d’intervention éducative auprès des poupons et des trottineurs*, translation of *Tender care and early learning: supporting infants and toddlers in child care settings*, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 2004, p. 113-119.

### APPENDIX 3

#### EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT ADAPTED TO THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF INFANT DEVELOPMENT

Infants lying on their back	Infants capable of rolling over onto their tummy	Infants capable of sitting	Crawlers	Toddlers
Ball (beach, hanging, etc.) Fabric balls Horseshoe cushion made of fabric to support the baby Rattle made of fabric Rattles Mobile Activity arch with objects to manipulate Infant seat with head rest	Balls of different sizes and textures Fabric blocks Plastic bottles with liquid inside Figures Rattles Wrists puppets Activity arch with objects to manipulate Mats of different textures	Indoor swings Balls having different textures Cardboard boxes Bowls and stackable containers Figures Slide on a slight incline Rattles Activity arch with objects to manipulate Dolls Miniature replicas Telephone	Plastic cars Soft ball Bar to hold on Blocks Cardboard boxes Crayons Dress-up clothes (hats, bags, etc.) Figures Rattles Mirror Module with an incline Baskets Dolls Miniature replicas Telephone Xylophone, small piano, etc.	Water box Sand box Balls Blocks Cardboard boxes Hoops Stairs Figures Slide Musical instruments Push, pull or ride-on toys Make-up Puppets Mirror Furniture for let's pretend play Baskets Play-dough Hand paint Small broom Small chairs Small tables Dolls Ramps Miniature replicas Telephone Suitcases, lunchboxes, etc.

Source: L. BOURGON and C. LAVALLÉE, *Échelle d'observation de la qualité éducative: les services de garde en pouponnière*, Québec, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, 2004, p. 26-27.



## APPENDIX 4

### EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS PROMOTING ALL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT (NURSERY)

Materials promoting the psychomotor dimension in particular	Materials promoting the socio-behavioural dimension in particular	Materials promoting the language dimension in particular	Materials promoting the stimulation of senses
Water box	Accessories for dolls	Poster	Odours (pouch, scented crayons, etc.)
Sand box	Accessories to dress up (hats, handbags, etc.)	Picture album	Textures (cushions, mats made of various textures, plush objects, fur, etc.)
Indoor swings	Accessories representing environments	Recorder	Colours (coloured filters, coloured liquid in a bottle, prism, etc.)
Balls	Camera (toy)	Player	Sounds (bells, mobiles, rattles; etc.)
Blocks (having different textures)	Cushions	Audiocassettes and CDs	
Surprise box	Scarf, blanket	Figures (animal, people, ducks, etc.)	
Cardboard boxes of different sizes	Make-up	Pictionary	
Trucks, cars	Mirror at babies' height	Sound-making toys	
Wooden puzzle	Furniture for let's pretend play	Books suitable for infants (cardboard, fabric, plastic, etc.)	
Hoops	Plush or fabric objects	Puppets	
Rocking horse	Family picture at babies' height	Mobile	
Crayons (wax or felt)	Dolls	Miniature models (farm, garage, etc.)	
Big toy vehicles (ride-on, push or pull)		Paint	
Rattles		Posted photographs	
Games to manipulate or to fit together		Telephone (toy)	
Water or sand toys (shovel, bucket, mould, etc.)			
Materials to fit together			
Stackable materials			
Paper and cardboard			
Structure for climbing (stairs, slide, etc.)			
Mat to roll or crawl			
Tunnel			

Source: L. BOURGON and C. LAVALLÉE, *Échelle d'observation de la qualité éducative: les services de garde en pouponnière*, Québec, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, 2004, p. 24-25.

## APPENDIX 5

### EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS PROMOTING ALL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT (CHILDREN 18 MONTHS AND OVER IN A FAMILY ENVIRONMENT)

Materials promoting the psychomotor dimension	Materials promoting the intellectual dimension	Materials promoting the socio-behavioural dimension	Materials promoting the language dimension	Materials promoting creativity
Water box Sand box Small balls Balls Jump ball Blocks of different sizes Cardboard boxes of different sizes Trucks Hoops Scissors Skipping rope Big toy vehicles (ride-on, push or pull) Water or sand toys (shovel, pail and mould, etc.) Stackable materials Threadable materials Parachute Small cars Bowling pins Rhythmic ribbons Bubble soap Structure for climbing (ladder, slide, etc.) Mat to roll or crawl Tunnel	Surprise box Calendar Puzzle Clock Dominos Inserting games Rule or parlour games Manipulation games (Mister Potato Head, materials for lacing, for attaching, etc.) Memory games LEGO, construction sets Material to classify or to sort by order Stackable materials Computer material (CD-ROM, Internet, etc.) Scientific material Objects to pour in and to empty out (funnel, measuring cup, etc.)	Accessories for dolls Accessories for dressing up (hats, handbags) Accessories representing environments Camera (real or toy) Cushions or poufs Blankets Figures (animals, people, ducks, etc.) Mirror at children's height Furniture for let's play pretend (small house, workbench, etc.) Miniature models (farm, garage, etc.) Make-up Plush or fabric objects Dolls Stroller Dress-up clothes	Poster Picture album Recorder Player Audiocassettes and CDs Pictionary Sound-making toys Alphabet letters (plastic, felt, cardboard) Books Typewriter or computer keyboard Puppets Computer Posted pictures Board (blackboard, peg board) Telephone (real or toy)	Clay Sticks (wooden, plastic, etc.) Catalogues or magazines Glue, adhesive tape or stapler Chalk Crayons Objects from nature (pine cones, leaves, shells) Printer Musical instruments Recycled materials Paper (white, coloured, construction paper, newspaper, etc.) Paper, construction paper for collective works Play-dough Paint Paint brushes, stamps, rollers, sponges, etc. Fabric, wool, cotton, etc.

Sources: L. BOURGON and C. LAVALLÉE, *Échelle d'observation de la qualité éducative: les services de garde en installation pour les enfants de 18 mois ou plus*, Québec, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, 2004, p. 22, and L. BOURGON and C. LAVALLÉE, *Échelle d'observation de la qualité éducative: les services de garde en milieu familial*, Québec, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, 2004.

