Personal Care

What’s involved in learning

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

Allow time for children to try things on their own. Encourage children to DO for themselves.

Conquering the Zipper

Alicia showed me something very special. At first, nothing looked out of the ordinary so I wondered what she was going to tell me. She told me, “I zipped my coat up.” I asked her if it was the first time she had ever zipped her coat on her own and she told me it was!

When we arrived outside, I asked Alicia if she could explain how she managed to zipper her jacket. She said quietly, “I just put this piece into this piece and pulled up my zipper.”

Congratulations, Alicia!

Jill McGuigan  UNB Children’s Centre

Carers put Love into action.

The way you care for your baby is how he [she] experiences your love. Everyday caregiving routines, like feeding or diapering, can be educational and loving interactions.

Magda Gerber (2002)

Books to read together

*Ella Sarah Gets Dressed*, by Margaret Chodos-Irvine
*Buz*, by Richard Egielski
*Now One Foot, Now The Other*, by Tomie DePaola
*Red’s Best*, by Kathy Stinson
*Grandpa*, by John Burningham

Visually depict routines, such as: Hand washing, Hanging up clothes, Teeth brushing, Dressing, Toileting, Sing songs to help things along. Model actions.
One afternoon while playing with the Treasure Basket, Paige focused her attention on a spoon and measuring cup. She was pretending to mix and then she brought the spoon up to her mouth with great ease. As I watched Paige play, I realized she was ready to feed herself lunch and snack.

- Tiffany Yeomans
  100 Aker Woods Daycare

Communicating with parents

Consistency from all caregivers is important. You and the parents of children who are ready for toilet learning will want to communicate closely.

- Gather information about toilet learning from the parent of each child. What expectations does the parent have about toilet learning? Do you need to be aware of specific cultural considerations?
- If toilet learning has not been initiated at home and you think a child is ready, discuss this with a parent. Agree on a workable plan to follow. Ensure that each child has a good supply of extra clothing.
- Know what words the parent wants to use to refer to body fluids, functions and body parts. However, because you are caring for more than one child, it may be more practical to use the same terminology for all the children.
- Children quickly learn the meaning of different terms. It is best to be direct about toilet learning.
- Communicate daily about the child’s toilet learning.

CCCF (2002)
Personal Care

Planning for Personal Care: Arrival Routines

In our classroom we have worked together to build a familiar routine that allows the children to manage their own arrival as they transition into the classroom from home.

Once the children arrive and enter the classroom, the first thing they do is...wash their hands. This routine becomes automatic and the children do it independently.

The children then make their way to the ‘sign-in’ table where they complete a series of arrival activities each morning: signing their names on a sign-in sheet; finding and putting on their name tag; and locating a clothespin with their name and putting it in the basket.

Leigh White and Gillian Bateman  UNB Children’s Centre

Felix washes his hands.

Jacob, Natalie and Mitchell sign in.

Nametages are set out on sign-in table each morning.

Kate and her Mom find her nametag and get ready to put it on.

The name tag basket is a quick way for the educators to see who has arrived and for children to learn to distinguish their name from others.
Why this matters:

A daily entry routine provides opportunities for children to become familiar with rhythms and routines of new situations, take responsibility for their well-being, and participate and increase independence in self-care routines. The printing and selecting of their names allows children to engage with the symbols and practices of language while they ease into their day.

Other Possibilities:

Arrival time is an important transition time for educators, children, and families. Routines should respect the needs of each family and provide continuity between the home and centre.

Strategies some centres have used to manage arrival times included:

- Children’s names on peg boards
- Documentation to revisit
- Notices to read together
- Comfortable places for family farewells
- Goodbye doors
- Farewelling Steps (see right)

How are children involved in transition times?

Personal Care

Growing Independence: Maria’s Visual Routine

Why did you feel photographs of the daily routines would be useful?

The photographs story the children’s day from arrival to departure. The photographic timeline of a typical day is a much more realistic and practical way to help children understand the passage of time as opposed to counting abstract numbers on a calendar or chart. The children are actually experiencing these events each day in the centre. This practice enables children to predict events, promotes receptive and expressive language, and includes children in documenting the timeline of their day.

How did you see it as helping children to grow in their independence with self-care routines?

I see it as encouraging independent action because the children can visualize events on the photos occurring and then they are able to independently carry out the actions. For example, when snack is brought into the room the children immediately and independently walk to the bathroom to wash their hands.

I think this practice promotes self-confidence and eases transitions. For example, Nicholas depended much less on his Mom at arrival times. He learned to place his personal belongings in their special places and then put on his own sneakers.

How did you see it as encouraging children to help others?

The photos of “tidy-up time” provided encouragement for some children who were not always the most enthusiastic “tidiers”. The children depicted in the photos were so proud to be in this position and took pleasure and pride in completing these tasks well. I also make sure to occasionally change the photos so that children see themselves and each other in different routines.

Children are aware of expectations. For example, if a child does not want to tidy-up I might ask, “What is Hannah-Jo doing in the photo?” I usually get the response “She’s putting away blocks” and a change in action.

Pictures are “interactive communications.” I regularly observe the children, alone and in groups, talking about the activities happening in the photos.
Did you have times when children commented on or noticed differences in routines at the centre and in their homes?

Children would often say, “Mommy puts on my sneakers”, or “Mommy puts on my snow pants”, or “Nanny washes my face”. Such comments presented challenges as we endeavored to help our children become increasingly independent.

Sometimes, children would comment on the fact that, at home, Mommy or Daddy cleaned up their toys and declared, “I don’t want to do it!” or “I don’t have to do this at home.” The photos really helped because children saw their friends carrying out self-care routines.

We talked about these events and the photos seemed to inspire the children to take control of their own tasks and responsibilities.

Maria Gillis  Unicorn Children’s Centre Inc.

For Reflection

What beliefs do you hold about children’s participation in self-care routines? Think about snack time, dressing, toileting, sleeping, diapering. How might your beliefs shape the practices in your centre? How do these practices inhibit or encourage children to take initiative?

In what ways are children encouraged to help themselves? In what ways are children encouraged to help others? Think about your responses to children’s requests for help. Think about access to supplies, peer helping, and contributions to procedures.

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

How are government health and safety regulations made visible in your centre and within centre policies? How do you negotiate these regulations as you plan for learning? Think about access to required posted information and responsibility for the management of regulatory information.
**Food and Nutrition**

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

**Adventures in Eating**
- Introduce new tastes.
- Introduce new ways of eating.
- Introduce local products.
- Include family favourites.
- Include foods from around the world.
- Make sure you participate in the adventure too.

**Cooking — Children Participate by:**
- Stirring
- Kneading
- Setting
- Cutting
- Sifting
- Flipping
- Measuring
- Washing
- Shaking
- Rolling
- Wiping
- Mixing
- Drying

**Ask • Inquire • Wonder**
- Where do eggs come from? Visit a food producer.
- How does a seed turn into a plant? Plant carrots outdoors; grow beans inside.

**How do you celebrate seasonal foods?**

**Down to Earth: Plant • Grow • Weed • Water • Harvest**

**Physical Health**

**Well-Being Professional Support Document**
What happens when children say they are not hungry?

Are they given opportunities to eat at other times?

How flexible are your centre’s meals and snack times?

People use different tools:
Forks
Chopsticks
Fingers

In what ways do you invite families and community members to share their recipes and culinary talents?

Books to read together
Growing Vegetable Soup, by Lois Ehlert
Stone Soup, by Marcia Brown
Pancakes, Pancakes!, by Eric Carle
Mean Soup, by Betsy Everitt
I Will Not Ever Eat A Tomato, by Lauren Child

Did you know?
Food as an art material in toddler and two-year-old programs is an issue because children of this age need to learn to distinguish between food that goes into the mouth and other objects and materials that don’t. And although scented play dough, felt pens, and finger paints are popular, they can confuse some children under three who are not sure yet what can be eaten and what can’t.

Janet Gonzalez-Mena (2008, 324)
Food and Nutrition

Making Decisions: Angela’s “Open Snack”

We had heard about and discussed the concept of “open snack” with another daycare at a curriculum orientation presentation. When we left that weekend I was still thinking about how it could work and had a lot of reservations about having 2-4 year olds helping themselves!

We had already been encouraging the children to pour their own drinks from small juice containers so that was not an issue. The biggest fear we had was letting the children have free choice with a tray of snacks. What about portion control, hygiene and general snack etiquette? We imagined spills and children grabbing handfuls of snack and general chaos.

The first time we tried it we put out snack at 3:15 and said “Snack is ready for anyone who wants to have it now”. As we expected everyone rushed to wash hands and were very impatient waiting in line. There were spilled drinks and napkins full of snack were dropped and wasted. We stepped back afterward and re-thought the approach.

Next time we placed snack out on table at 3:15 and I very quietly approached a small group asking “Would you like to have snack now or later?” Some chose now, others picked later. We also used plates instead of napkins to let the children carry snack to their table easier. This time snack went smoothly and it still does.
Once in awhile we need to ask a child to leave some snack for the other friends too, but usually just the first time or two. Portions are very close to what we would have given them so there is not an increase in food cost and the children are much more relaxed.

When finished they clear their spot, and can go back to play until everyone has a chance to have snack. The snack is cleared away by 3:40; everyone has helped themselves for firsts and seconds and cleaned up after themselves. Even the youngest toddlers get to participate and the pride and independence they feel is very evident as they strut back to their seat carrying their plate and cup.

We have a true buffet style snack that is very relaxed and the children love it!

Angela Thompson  Kings County Kids Daycare Centre

Why this matters:

The open snack concept gives children the opportunity to make choices about when, what, and how much they want to eat. As Angela points out in her account, there is a short period of time when children may be adjusting to this routine but that they soon learn what a reasonable amount is for themselves. Serving themselves allows children control over the amount they take and gives them practice with pouring and carrying food and drink. They are also able to say "no" when they are not hungry, an important concept in learning about the relationship between food and their bodies.

Other Possibilities:

Your centre’s schedule, numbers of children, and physical space will shape your snack time routines. An open snack works for Angela and her children, but that does not mean it will work for everyone. Important learning considerations to think about from Angela’s story are choice and independence.

There are many reasons for snacking together too:

- celebration times
- tasting new foods
- eating food the children have prepared
- guest chefs
How did you decide to make muffins with the children?

I make play dough once a week with the children in my class. I noticed how they take great pleasure in helping to pour the flour, oil, and salt into the bowl. I thought that they might enjoy making something other than play dough, so I decided to make a muffin mix with them. This would require more ingredients and a lot more interaction with the process of baking including, mixing, and pouring. I also felt it would be fun for them to see how things were made from start to finish.

What were you hoping the children would learn?

I was hoping they would learn more about how to mix a batter, pour ingredients, as well as the different names of the products that go into baking, i.e. oil, eggs, flour etc. I also wanted them to have the experience of holding, cracking, and seeing the inside of an egg. I posted a recipe with both words, and referred back to this recipe throughout the activity to initiate language between the children. I also gave the children a turn either pouring or mixing; this gave them more experience with taking turns.

What provisions were made so children could do things for themselves?

I had prepared the activity ahead of time and had decided to allow the children the opportunity to do the entire procedure themselves. I would assist them when they needed help, but they were allowed to try for themselves first. I had decided to make a muffin mix because the ingredients were simple for the children to measure and pour. This activity would give the children a feeling of success in their accomplishments. I also did a recipe that pictorially showed what was needed to be added to the mixture and how many. An example of this would be: one egg. I gave each child a plastic knife and a plastic container full of frosting so that they were able to frost their own muffin. By doing this procedure the children could take ownership of the cooking activity.
Where did you go from there?

I was amazed by the pride and ownership the children took in the muffin activity; they beamed with self-confidence. Since then cooking has become a regular part of our days at daycare. I decided to add to this experience by making different recipes, which involved more ingredients, more pouring, more mixing and the cracking of eggs. The children have made different types of foods since their first cooking experience. We have made bread and even ice cream. The children really relate to the recipes more now. They have confidence in their abilities, and are starting to do more for themselves on a daily basis. They are pouring their own milk for snack and lunches. THEY CAN DO IT!

What other cooking experiences have I considered?

I have thought about uncooked edible play dough, and preparing a stew using vegetables etc. At the end of the year, after lots of exposure to cooking and baking, I would like to present to the children actual measured ingredients that are put out on a tray, and a visual recipe to see if they would know what to do. Would they use the recipe? What would they do with the ingredients?

Donna Baisley Just Kids Preschool Centre Inc.

For Reflection

How can you become more familiar with the food practices and preferences of children and their families? How might such insights influence your practices? Think about regional favourites, family traditions, and dietary choices.

How are children included in food preparation and serving? Think about developing safe routines so children can participate regularly in food preparation. Think about children’s questions, potential learnings, and discussions about food — cooking, shopping, and growing.

How does your centre encourage and balance families’ contributions for snacks and meals with government standards for food and nutrition? Think about the time, space, and supplies necessary to work with families to prepare foods on site.
Body and Movement

What’s involved in learning

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

Encourage Physical Activity

🌟 Participate with children, be a role model.
🌟 Dress in everyday clothing that encourages free movement and mobility.
🌟 Photograph children being active.
🌟 Actively support children’s initiatives and interests in physical activity.
🌟 Visit parks. Practice the fundamental skills of running, throwing, catching and kicking a ball.
🌟 Introduce both boys and girls to active women, as well as men.
🌟 Make observations without reference to gender.
🌟 Plan activities within children’s’ abilities.

Elaine Lowe and CCCF (2001)

A physical focus on Infants and Toddlers...

- Ramps, railings, and low steps
- Graphics on the floor
- Push and pull toys that make sounds
- Multi-levelled play spaces

There’s Always Time To DANCE

There’s Always Time To DANCE
Did you know?

Toddlers need plenty of exercise and should not be restricted in their gross-motor activities, such as running, tumbling, and climbing. Although some adults believe such activities can only be done outdoors (which may be true for older children), toddlers should be allowed to run inside, ride small, wheeled toys, and play on plastic slides. Learning to use their bodies and their rapidly emerging skills is extremely important to them. Janet Gonzalez-Mena (2008, 320)

Healthy Risk

Healthy risk doesn’t mean anything goes, but involves the recognition of children as capable and adventuresome beings.

Discover possibilities… There are risks worth taking…

- trees to climb
- balance beams to walk
- banks to slide
- mountains to climb
- streams to explore
- hills to roll
- gardens to dig

Indoors & Outdoors

Where do infants play? Where do toddlers play? Where do young children play?

Books to read together

*From Head to Toe*, by Eric Carle
*Parts*, by Ted Arnold
*Tumble Bumble*, by Felicia Bond
*Silly Sally*, by Audrey Wood

Children MOVE!
Body and Movement

EXPLORING BODY AND MOVEMENT: Lisa’s Yoga Classes

A component of my yoga teacher training certification was to instruct practice sessions. I was interested in teaching yoga to children so I approached the morning educators at my son’s centre. We thought this would be an opportunity for children to try something new. I wrote an information letter and consent form to inform families of my project. Once all consent forms were collected we scheduled our first session.

I researched Yoga instruction for children by reading books and articles and by speaking with other instructors who work with children. I planned the sessions to engage children in imaginative ways. I began the first session by inviting the children to “Visit a Mountain” in their minds. I asked them for ideas about what they would see on their journey to the mountain. Their ideas included: trees, bears, and butterflies. I connected the various parts of the mountain journey to traditional Yoga poses. For instance, before going to the mountain the children had to make sandwiches for the journey which allowed the practicing of the forward bend pose. The yoga sessions included many bends, twists, balancing and stretches. For the second session I created a sun dance and an accompanying story to teach the sun salutation poses, again drawing on a story to incorporate the children’s imaginations.

While the children worked through the yoga poses, turning themselves into flowers, butterflies, bears and mountain climbers, a range of comments were made such as:
“I do yoga at home.”
“My mom does this sometimes.”
“I’ve done this before.”

Lisa Wilby  UNB Children’s Centre

Tree pose helps with balance and the idea of being rooted to the earth. I asked, “How strong is a tree? No matter what the weather, a tree is strong and stands straight and proud.” Using such imagery allows the children to connect with the poses and it resonates with them as they practice.

Butterfly pose stretches inner thighs. I had the children search from flower to flower with ‘antennae’ (arms), allowing to add back stretches as well.
Inclusiveness and Equity          Compassion and Caring

• Living Democratically
• Individuality                     And Independence
• Social Responsibility
• Communication
• Imagination, Creativity & Play
• Spirituality
• Zest for Living and Learning

Why this matters:
The yoga sessions provided the children and their educators with more variety in their physical activities. As the children tried different poses they explored their bodies in space and challenged their physicality in new ways. As they stretched they had to test and respect their bodies’ physical limits. The poses provided children with opportunities to increase bodily strength and control, balance and limberness, and large and fine motor coordination. Children were able to try the poses on their own, while other poses required the children to work together.

Other Possibilities:
Who in your community could share their knowledge about bodies and movement?

• yoga, dance, and movement instructors
• nutritionists and naturopaths
• high school leadership students
• athletes and coaches

• community recreation leaders
• nurses and doctors
• family members
Body and Movement

Stretching Physical Limits: *Shelby Shows-Off Her Skills*

Shelby has been trying to go up the stairs by herself for the last couple of weeks. Today she showed us what she can do. She says “1-2-3” as she goes up the stairs.

When she got to the top of the Stairs I said “You did it!” and clapped my hands. Shelby says “Did it!” She turned around to go down the slide. She waited to make sure that I was watching. Then she went down the slide. “Whhee” Shelby said.

Shelby is learning to try things on her own with little assistance. She is trusting her educators and feeling more comfortable with her surroundings.

Tammy O’Neill  Chatham Day Care Centre Inc.

Shelby’s growing confidence on the slide, as Tammy notes, is evidence that she is developing a sense of trust in the adults around her and gaining a positive attitude regarding her own capabilities. Having documented this experience, Tammy will begin to look for other situations in which she sees Shelby “stepping out”.

What other things does she try? What does “trust” look like in Shelby’s case? What does she do or say that shows trust? As Tammy documents new experiences she will also be asking herself what she can do to support this growth. What is next for Shelby and how can Tammy provide an environment that continues to encourage the learning that is taking place?
For Reflection

How do policies at your centre promote or prevent exploration of natural spaces, healthy risk-taking, and quality outdoor activity? Think about regulations regarding going off site, weather-related policies, and schedule restrictions.

In outdoor/indoor areas collect examples of children’s healthy risk taking. Think about conversations, gestures, facial expressions, body movement, patterns of action, and social relationships. Think about how you support children’s initiatives in outdoor and indoor spaces.

How do you discover the interests, hobbies, and activities of families and staff after centre hours? How are such interests and activities explored in your centre?

Think about where you played outdoors as a child. Who did you play with? What did you do? What materials were available? What risks did you take? How might this experience inform your planning for outdoor participation?

How do you involve children in decisions about safety and appropriateness of play space equipment and materials? Think about issues of inclusion, gender, and age appropriateness.
Works Cited


Professional Resources


Picture Books Support Literacies in Every Goal


These picture books are available through the New Brunswick Public Library system. Search these authors at http://vision.gnb.ca/ to find other great books.
Inclusiveness and Equity

• Individuality and Independence

• Communication

• Imagination, Creativity & Play

• Spirituality

• Zest for Living and Learning

Compassion and Caring

• Social Responsibility

• Aesthetics

• Imagination, Creativity & Play

• Spirituality

• Zest for Living and Learning

Living Democratically