***Checklist for Quality Inclusive Education***

Children learn about diversity through play which includes music, clothing, foods, games, celebrations and dramatic play that represents the diversity of their families, their communities, and the environment in which they live, work, and play.

Such an environment will foster children’s positive self-concept and attitudes. It will assist them in developing positive ideas about themselves and others. It will create the conditions under which children can initiate conversations about similarities and differences.

An inclusive environment is not just designed for children from particular cultures or with particular needs. As a matter of fact, it’s important to avoid reading books or placing materials in a learning centre to emphasize them in order to meet the needs of some children. No one likes to be centered out. All children need to feel they belong and need opportunities to explore similarities and differences.

To create a truly inclusive curriculum/environment you can ask yourself the following questions many of which were inspired or suggested by Rachel Langford for the *Checklist for Quality Inclusive Education*.

* How does my culture influence my teaching style and expectations?
* Do I step back and listen and observe what is happening in the program, what issues are surfacing with the parents and children?
* Do I pick up on nonverbal and verbal expressions of interest as quickly with girls as with boys? With differently-able children? With children of color?
* Do I seek out teachable moments to encourage questions or step in with anti-bias redirection of play or discussions? Do I plan follow-ups and adapt the playroom and the program to the changing needs and interest?
* Do I emphasize and model values of acceptance, empathy, fairness, kindness, respect and responsibility for others?
* Do I facilitate exploration, ignore or redirect children when they touch an adult’s hair or skin, or make comments about skin color or hair texture?
* Do I give direct, accurate feedback when children ask about genitals or ask or make comments about disabilities?
* Do I help all children (boys, girls, differently-able),
* pursue their quest for knowledge?
* learn to understand and appreciate our world’s rich diversity of cultures, abilities, and interests?
* express their feelings?
* do the best they can rather than over-help or overlook them?
* learn to negotiate and collaborate in democratic ways?
* Do I compliment girls on appearance and boys on achievement?
* Do I respond differently to a boy who acts aggressively, a child belonging to a minority group in the community or a child with special needs?
* How do I define play in my setting? What is normative play in my setting? Whose values are honored in the play that is acceptable in my setting?

There is evidence that children in unfamiliar settings both play and speak less freely,

are labeled as aggressive, disruptive, loud or meek, bashful and unresponsive. Spontaneous play and spontaneous language imply underlying knowledge of the rules of the game, of the environment. Children are competent in play when they are on familiar ground, using familiar words and materials and sharing a common set of expectations.

* Do I talk about the child rather than the challenge? For example, talk about the child with autism rather than the autistic child*.*
* Are the different spaces such as the washrooms, pathways, outdoor areas physically accessible to each child? Are there large clear pathways? Tables at various heights?
* Can a child in a wheelchair, walker or crawling develop autonomy by being able to access and return materials easily?
* Are the routines established sensitive to the individual needs and cultural norms of the children?
* Do I evaluate the existing environment and weed out materials that perpetuate myths, stereotypes or that portray insulting images?
* Is it rich in possibilities for exploring gender, ethnicity, and varying abilities?
* Do I provide for each child a balance of challenge and support to scaffold new learning?
* Does my planning take into account the interests and needs of the children? Does it have a meaningful purpose? Does it make sense to them? Is it familiar to them? Can they build on what they already know?
* Do I provide materials that are both familiar and unfamiliar?
* Do I introduce gradually new objects and experiences that are age appropriate?
* Do I arrange materials neatly on shelves and use labels in a variety of communication forms?
* Do I avoid clutter, confusion and overstimulation by putting out too many materials?
* Do I intervene when children are using materials inappropriately; describe and expect appropriate use and if necessary voice my own feelings?

*I’m uncomfortable with the way you are using the cane. I am concerned that you can hurt yourself or somebody. People who use canes need them because their legs are not strong enough to walk. Do you know anyone who uses a can? Can you show me how they use it?*

* Do I use open-ended or divergent questions about the materials to foster critical thinking about diversity?

*What could we use this for? What else?*

*Why do you think....?*

* Do I provide mirrors and/or cameras for self-examination, for children to explore their physical selves?
* Are the snacks and meals provided planned to include a variety of foods (tortillas, matzos, bannock)? Do I avoid mentioning that they are different?
* Since books are a significant part of young children’s lives, am I giving sufficient care to their selection and use? Do I select books that depict:
* differences in non stereotypic ways?
* different ways of living and that show various groups solving similar problems?
* people in different socio economic settings?
* situations, problems and experiences in a variety of cultural settings?
* universal themes such as courage, family, hope, struggle?
* positive role models for all including girls, women, boys, men, aboriginal, Métis*,* persons with varying abilities, gay/lesbian doing a range of activities?
* a variety of family compositions?
* are in languages other than the language spoken in the center?
* are bilingual?
* are child or teacher made reflecting all diversity areas represented in setting, community, country?
* pictures with no text, minimal text, or text in large print, signed text?
* legends of cultural groups?
* stories accessorized with puppets or felt board figures (different sizes, multiracial, varying abilities, different ages, different dress, e.g. hijab?
* Do photographs or pictures displayed include:
* all the children in the group, their families and/or caregivers as well as images of staff?
  + children and adults from different ethnic groups, working class families?
  + boys and girls or women and men in nontraditional activities?
  + differently-able, body types and elderly people of various backgrounds doing different activities, work and participating with their families in recreational activities?
  + family styles that depict: single mothers or fathers, extended families, families with a grandparent as the primary caregiver, interracial & multiethnic families and differently-able families?
  + people in traditional clothes as for celebrations as well in their everyday clothes?
  + artwork that reflects the culture of the families represented in your classroom?
* Do I use terms that include non-traditional families such as caregiver and guardian?
* Is diversity reflected in the different areas of play by the material or equipment included? For example, at different times include in the dramatic play centre:
* props from different areas of a house that alternate with the kitchen such as a workroom, a family room, a bedroom?
* a business or service in the community?
* female and male dolls that vary in shape, size, skin color, with hair types, facial features, and with varying abilities?
* different carrying and sleeping apparatus: e.g. snugglies, body wraps, basket, cradles?
* various types of clothing: e.g. batik, saris, kimonos, serapes, kente cloth, ponchos, kimonos?
* fabric to use for capes, saris, head wraps?
* special clothing for festivals and holidays?
* variety of hats: e.g. sombreros, hard hats?
* variety of shoes: e.g. moccasins, clogs, slippers, work boots, baboosh?
* pictures of men and women of different ages, in similar kinds of roles and jobs in different countries?
* material and equipment for different jobs: e.g. health, building, hair styling?
* food packaging from a variety of cultures?
* chopsticks , wooden bowls, plates, woks, tortilla presses, kitchen utensils from many cultures?
* variety of materials for communication: e.g. telephones, tablets, mirrors, computer, Braille writer?
* child sized wheelchair, walker, crutches (Ask families if they could contribute any outgrown materials)?
* from a child who has outgrown his), glasses, hearing aids or pictures of people with these aids?
* pictures of different family compositions?
* Do I supply children with a variety of art materials to express their creativity or learn about the art of their community or others such as beading, pottery? These can include paper, paint, clay, play dough, markers, crayons, pencils, and collage materials reflecting the full range of skin, eye, and hair colors and tones.
* Do I give physical freedom to boys, girls and differently-able children to use large-motor equipment at different times in the outdoor area:
* a collection of vehicles requiring different skill levels?
* vehicles with adaptive supports?
* cooperative play materials to encourage peer interaction?
* wheelchair route and clear pathways with well painted lines?
* bells inside balls, brightly painted?
* ladder steps for children with visual needs?
* a variety of gross motor equipment such as:
* balls, hoops, tunnels in varying sizes?
* differently sized slides for varying abilities?
* sandbox with multiple levels so a wheelchair can slide under it?
* found materials for play: (twigs, rocks)?
* Do I at different times include in the block centre:
* multiracial figures that also depict varying abilities and ages?
* combinations of figurines that allow for play with different family compositions (same sex, one parent families, cross cultural)?
* raw materials for building: (cardboard boxes, canvas, string, tape, leaves, sticks)?
* blocks in different sizes and made from different materials?
* pictures of females and males in construction and engineering roles?
* pictures showing a variety of homes, landscapes, buildings and architectural landmarks in the community, throughout the world?
* toy wheelchairs, houses/building with ramp entrances and elevators?
* Do I at different times include on the discovery table:
* a variety of spices to smell, foods to taste, objects to look at or musical instruments from diverse cultural traditions?
* instruments made by children?
* various objects used to make music: e.g. gourds, washboards, spoons?
* textured materials to feel, patterned cloth and weavings to look at?
* a variety of beans and rice in containers to listen to?
* materials found in the environment or supplied by families of different cultural backgrounds?
* images of seniors of various backgrounds doing family activities, work, recreational activities?
* Do I provide a variety of materials at different times in the sensory tables? Do I vary the accessories (water wheel, bamboo, mesh or wooden scoops, steamer baskets, a variety of boats, shells, rocks, sticks)?
* Do I at different times introduce a variety of music and movement:
* from different regions or countries?
* children’s songs about diversity, cooperation and peace?
* recordings of children singing, families singing childhood songs in their home language?
* translations of familiar songs?
* folk dance as well as modern music recordings represented in setting, community, country?
* variety of movement props: e.g. streamers, bean bags, scarves?
* variety of accessories to put on a show (microphone, glasses, fabrics, jewelry)?
* variety of pictures showing different types of dance: e.g. all men, all women, older and younger, a person in a wheelchair?
* Do I at different times vary the technology used by introducing:
* adaptations: e.g. touch screens, keyboards, headphone, voice synthesizers?
* software for a variety of developmental abilities?
* software that promotes nonviolent ways to solve problems and correct mistakes?
* software that fosters positive representation of all diversity areas?
* software that offers varying skill levels?
* software that comes in multiple languages represented in setting, community, and country?
* seating that facilitates peer interaction?
* pictures of diverse people using a computer (girls/women, multiracial people, people with varying abilities)?
* Do I guide the children in examining stereotypes and bias in media from a variety of sources? Is that really how people dress? Who else can be an astronaut? Does that mean he’s bad or that he could have made a better choice? What else could be done in such a situation? What do you think?
* Do I raise the awareness of the children to the environment and how to protect it? Do I provide them opportunities to reduce, recycle and reuse?

Letter to the parents

Dear parents and caregivers,

We want to make our centre reflective of the different families in the community as well as those around the world. Our dramatic center in particular could use accessories from different ethnic backgrounds.

We also want to raise the children’s awareness on how to help and protect our environment. Your donations and your help in collecting reusable or recyclable items would be greatly appreciated.

This will allow us to talk about your child’s experience at home, in the community and more while freeing you of objects that you never use or wear. It will also help your child develop good attitudes towards consumption and recycling.

The following list is to give you ideas on what we can use.

We sincerely thank you for your help.

* Kitchen accessories
* Food packaging
* Fabric pieces that could be used as capes, baby carrier or other
* Embroidered shirts, kimonos, saris, vests, hats, scarves, jewelry
* Footwear, purses, wallets
* Outgrown set of crutches, wheelchair
* Mats, cushions, table cloths
* Photographs or pictures of family members from different countries at celebrations, at work or recreational activities
* Ethnic crafts, decorations or used birthday items
* Accessories or items used in the different community businesses or services
* Anything else you think the children might enjoy!