



## Supportive Conversations – Responding to children’s ideas and interests

### Summary

#### What does it mean to respond to children, anyway?

- An acknowledgement that an educator makes to children’s comments and ideas by asking questions and making comments.

#### What’s the Point?

- Creates a welcoming environment where all children feel a sense of belonging
- Promotes children's receptive and expressive language skills
- Increase the child’s confidence to engage in conversations with their peers
- Builds child’s sense of self and others
- When educators notice and respond to children’s efforts to express their thoughts and listen to others, it encourages citizenship and nurtures classroom community

#### How Do I Do This?

- Get down to children’s eye level whenever possible when a child is initiating a desire to communicate.
- Make eye contact, smile, and use other positive non-verbal body language such as nodding their head to demonstrate their interest
- Refer to children by their name
- Use a positive and supportive tone of voice to demonstrate interest and respect
- If the educator is busy or talking to another person when child initiates; pause to acknowledge the child and ask them politely and respectfully to wait, return attention to the child as soon as possible
- Respond to children’s comments by asking questions and making comments to create positive back and forth interactions

#### How Will the Children Participate in This Practice?

- Children listen to and respond to their peer's communication initiations by asking each other questions and making related comments
- Children learn each other's names and learn about each other by asking each other questions “What’s your favorite colour?”

## Checklist

| Task                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Complete? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Educators learn the names of each child in the program and refer to children by their name most of the time.                                                                                          |           |
| Educators engage families to learn how children prefer to be acknowledged (hug, rub back, verbal statement.)                                                                                          |           |
| Educators review the daily routine and the sharing of responsibilities to ensure that all team members have time to respond to children's communication initiations appropriately throughout the day. |           |
| When children approach an educator, turn towards the child, move to their eye level whenever possible.                                                                                                |           |
| Educators use nonverbal cues such as eye contact to show they are listening and interested. If busy with a task, still pause to acknowledge the child (use of "wait" sign, eye contact or a touch.)   |           |
| Educators use a statement, question, response or counter response to engage children in conversation.                                                                                                 |           |
| Educators give children positive descriptive feedback about their initiations. ("Thank you for tapping my shoulder gently, how can I help you?")                                                      |           |
| Educators engage other children in conversation by asking a related question to the group, "Albos just told me he is going camping this weekend! What fun, who else likes to go camping?"             |           |
| Educators share children's comments, questions, and stories with their families verbally or through written stories and documentation.                                                                |           |

When you support children's social learning opportunities by facilitating each child's efforts to observe, share ideas, be heard, solve problems, and participate, you support their participation in play and learning.

Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette & Thomas, 2014, p. 128

*Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework.*

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