



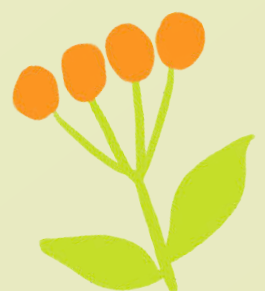
Child Development Supports



ARCQE supports programs in implementing and using the **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**. This program considers child development in the following domains: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving and social-emotional development.

The **Play and Grow Report** identified four focus areas for increasing outdoor play in Alberta ELCC programs. GRASP and REACH have the most potential to support educators and families in understanding and embracing outdoor play. Here is how the Child Development Supports can contribute to this work.

Weather - Adapting
Practice of Relationships - Families
Responsive Environments - Space
Regulatory Environment



Weather - Adapting



"The outdoors is offering you a gift, not a curse." – Post-secondary Instructor

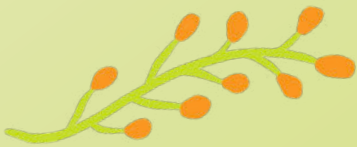
One of the gifts of outdoor play is that the conditions can offer play provocations and spark curiosity. Rain can inspire puddle jumping, the sun can support water play, the wind can evoke flying, and snow can deliver building material. Adapting to the conditions and embracing change is an important skills for both educators and children. Being outdoors builds these fundamental skills in children as the environment is variable and often changing.

Why would educators have challenges adapting the changing conditions?

- Lack of experience with Alberta's weather conditions.
- Set in their previously planned activities (lack of flexibility).
- Planning time is focused on indoor environments & there may not be enough planning for outdoor experiences.
- Limited materials to embrace variable conditions, for example flags and kites for the wind or umbrella & boats for rain and puddles.

How can we support educators in embracing conditions?

- Provide hands-on, active professional development outdoors in a variety of weather conditions.
- Create bins of resources that can be used in different conditions that are easy to grab & bring outside.
- Discuss weather conditions in staff meetings & how to support play in these conditions.
- Expect outdoor play in all weather conditions & connect these experiences to child development outcomes.
- Consider how to connect the indoor and outdoor environment by extending interests outdoors.



Practice of Relationships - Families

Families are an important part of the ASQ process & providing resources to enable parents to take an active role in supporting their child's development is key to the success. Tying outdoor play to child development for families would expand the opportunities for connection & development.

Why might families focus on indoor experiences?

- The belief that 'real' learning takes place inside & that outdoors is for play and physical activity.
- Limited access to safe outdoor spaces like parks.
- Challenges accessing community outdoor space due to traffic & transportation considerations.
- Lack of appropriate clothing for cold & wet times of year.

How to support families in outdoor play!

- Host events outdoors that incorporates a variety of ASQ developmental domains.
- Provide activity ideas to do in any outdoor setting connected to the ASQ developmental domains.
- Map local parks and natural areas within walking distance.



Responsive Environments - Space

“I would create an enchanting outdoor space designed specifically to captivate children’s imagination and interest. These spaces would have nature trails, sensory gardens and open areas for group activities.” – Level 3 Facilitybased Educator

Creating outdoor environments that support all aspects of child development is a role CDS coaches could take to advance outdoor play. Outdoor environments are often seen as spaces that solely support gross motor development, which is important, but how can we expand the opportunities in these spaces for all aspects of child development?

Why are outdoor spaces ‘uninspiring’?

- Focus on developing quality indoor spaces, limited funds given for outdoor space.
- Small outdoor spaces that limits the possibilities outdoors.
- Programs have marginal spaces outdoors like rooftops or fenced off parking areas with no nature.
- Less time spent outside therefore not the focus of planning and design.
- How can we support educators with the spaces they have?

How can we support educators with the spaces they have?

- Encourage loose parts in the outdoor environment, it is a low cost, open-ended way to add variety & opportunity to the space regardless of the location. This includes PD that teaches about loose parts.
- Add natural elements like planters, for example, introduce natural loose parts like leaves & sticks.
- Apply the ASQ categories to the outdoor space. How are educators supporting all aspects of child development outdoors?
- Support the exploration of spaces beyond the fence that may offer more opportunities for nature connection.





Regulatory Environment

“We had hammers, nails, and screws for fine motor development, but we really had to sell it to the regulators.” – Level 3 Facilitybased Educator

Introducing new materials into a program can open up novel experiences that truly support all aspects of child development. Many educators lack background knowledge about outdoor play and cannot clearly explain the intention and thought behind their choices in the outdoor space. It can be easier to stick to recognizable toys instead of loose parts.

Why might educators be hesitant to introduce new materials outdoors?

- Unsure of the reaction of regulatory agencies like licensing and health especially around outdoor experiences that may be considered ‘risky’.
- Not clear as to what the regulations actually say regarding these types of experiences.
- Fear of a non-compliance.

How can we support educators?

- Help educators make the connections between their curriculum choices in the outdoor space and child development.
- Allow educators to practice articulating these choices in a safe environment so when questions are asked by regulatory agencies, they are confident explaining their why.
- Encourage programs to have an open and understanding relationship with their licensing officer.





Resources



Resources - Space

- Rusty Keeler, Landscape Architect <https://rustykeeler.com/inspiration/>
- Outdoor Loose Parts 5 Materials to Spark Imagination and Curiosity <http://getoutsideandplay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Outdoor-Loose-Parts-Get-Outside-and-Pla.pdf>
- Outdoor Loose Parts Storage Ideas <https://getoutsideandplay.ca/outdoor-loose-parts-storage-ideas/>
- Moving Loose Parts Outdoors <https://getoutsideandplay.ca/moving-loose-parts-outdoors/>
- Pop-up Adventure Play Resources and Research for Loose Parts: <https://www.popupadventureplay.org/resources-and-research/>
- A Walking Curriculum for the Early Years <https://outdoorlearning.com/product/a-walking-curriculum-for-the-early-years/>
- Child and Nature Alliance Guide for Bringing Learning Outside: https://childnature.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/T.O_9_EN_A-Teachers-Guidebook-for-bringing-learning-outside-1.pdf

Resources - Practice of Relationships



- Dressing for the Weather <https://getoutsideandplay.ca/dressing-for-the-weather/>
- Jacket Racket Calgary <http://jacketracketcalgary.com/>
- Affordable adult snow pants: <https://getoutsideandplay.ca/perfect-snowpants/>
- Outside Play Interactive Parent Toolkit: <https://www.outsideplay.org/tool-microsites/parent-tool>
- Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement Healthy development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention: <https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/outdoor-risky-play>
- Adults Role in Outdoor Play: https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/adults-in-outdoor-play/

Resources - Regulatory

- Risk-Benefit Assessment for Outdoor Play: A Canadian Toolkit <https://www.outdoorplaycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Risk-Benefit-Assessment-Toolkit.pdf>
- Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement Healthy development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention: <https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/outdoor-risky-play>
- GoNAPSACC Outdoor Play and Learning Self-Assessment <https://gonapsacc.org/self-assessment-materials>
- Outside Play Interactive Toolkit for Educators: <https://www.outsideplay.org/tool-microsites/early-child-education-home>

