This module addresses the images of the child, family and educator which is the basis of the Early Learning Framework (the Framework).

Although we always work from specific images of the child, we rarely make them explicit in our practices. Our practice ‘says’ what our images of the child are. Further, we began a process of thinking about our practice in a way that shows us how to make visible our images of the child. In the readings, reflections and activities for this and the next two modules, we come to understand that this process of reflecting about the images of the child is key to understanding why we do what we do.

We will begin to critically examine the predominant images of the child intrinsic to child development principles and developmentally appropriate practice. We come at this issue by (1) examining the work of several authors who have ‘questioned’ the images of the child that developmentally appropriate practice reflects and (2) by considering how the images of the child embraced in the Framework go beyond and broaden the developmental images.

As you move through this module and the program, keep the following questions in the forefront of your mind:

- What perspective of the child do I have?
- How is that perspective reflected in my practice?
- Who do I think children are?
- What assumptions are embedded in the way I look at children, I talk about children, I work with children?
- Which sciences do I bring into my own image of the child? (e.g., child development, anthropology, history, genetics, biology)?
- What views are missing from my understanding of who children are?
- What meanings of words or concepts are key to my understanding of children?
- Are there any other ways of understanding what the words I wrote mean?
- What meanings are marginalized or silenced (‘othered’)?
- How do these meanings lead to taken-for-granted assumptions about children?

As acknowledged in the Framework, its development has drawn on many existing early childhood education frameworks/curricula from around the world: Reggio Emilia; District #23 (Central Okanagan), the Province of New Brunswick, Ireland, Sweden and New Zealand (BC Early Learning Framework, section 2, p. 2).
In this module, we look specifically at one key aspect of the Framework, namely the images of children. Here is how the Framework refers to the image of the child:

Whether one is aware of it or not, everybody has an image of the child that is rooted in their culture, knowledge, personal histories, and aspirations for the future. In many ways, the image of the child reflects not only a person’s beliefs about children and childhood, but also their beliefs about what is possible and desirable for human life at the individual, social, and global levels.

The particular image of the child held by people strongly influences their decisions about young children, the way they interact with children, and how they construct the environments where children grow, develop and learn. If people believe that children are curious, capable beings full of potential with views and perspectives to share, then they are likely to interact with them in ways that allow these qualities to shine. Being aware of their own image of the child helps adults to reflect on and make conscious choices that foster children’s early learning.

This framework supports the creation of a shared image of the child that can guide efforts to promote early learning at the local and provincial levels. It views young children as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities, and their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage. In this image, children are rooted in and take nourishment from a rich, supportive ground, comprised of relationships with their families and communities, their language and culture, and the surrounding environment. As children grow and learn, they ask questions, explore, and make discoveries, supported by these roots and branching out to new experiences, people, places, and things in their environment. Within this complex ecology, every child belongs and contributes (Early Learning Framework_v04.pdf, section 2, p. 4).

The Framework’s Image of the child

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It views young children as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities, and their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage.

Where does our own image of the child come from?

Making the image visible

We all have different images of the child. Although we always work from specific images, we rarely make these images explicit in our practice.

By examining our practice, we can gain insight into our image of the child and make this image visible to ourselves as early childhood educators, to families and to children too.
Deepening Our Thinking about the Image of the Child

- What assumptions are embedded in the way I look at children, I talk about children, I work with children?
- Which sciences do I bring into my own image of the child? (e.g., child development, genetics, biology)?
- How do I take into account each child's individual abilities and challenges?
- How do I take into account each child's unique cultural and social heritage?
- What meanings of words or concepts are key to my understanding of children?
- Are there any other ways of understanding who children are?
- How do these meanings lead to “taken-for-granted” assumptions about children?

Valuing Aboriginal Members as members of our Learning Community

“In putting forward an image of a capable child, full of potential, it is recognized that children differ in their strengths and capabilities, and that not all children have the same opportunities to develop their potential.

However, a strong image of the child can inspire people who interact with children to promote their individual strengths, and to address conditions in children’s environments—locally, provincially, and globally—that constrain opportunities to engage fully in early learning”. (BC Early Learning Framework)

Reflection, Action, Planning for Change

- What is my image of the child? For example, do I see the child as an empty cup waiting to be filled with knowledge? Do I see the child as a seed that needs watering and care to grow? Do I see the child as competent?
- How is the framework’s image of the child reflected in my practice? For example, how are children’s complex identities supported in my program?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the framework’s image?
- How can I know if this image of the child is evident in my program?

Assessing your current relationship with parents

Before proceeding, take a few minutes and critically reflect on your relationship with parents. Construct four brief statements that illustrate the relationship you (or your Centre) currently have with parents.
These statements should address the relationship with families as it actually is at your centre, not what you wish or hope it to be.

Following are a few examples of possible statements, but please do not limit the nature of your own statements based on these examples:

- The parents attend scheduled meetings three times a year when I outline the educational approach I am taking at the Centre.
- The parents and I share stories of various cultural activities important to the children.
- Parents serve on the Centre’s oversight committee.
- Some parents regularly help out on field trips and provide resources to the Centre.

**Image of the Family in the Framework**

Educators must value and support the important contributions of families in all their diversity.

Regardless of their circumstances, every family has unique social and cultural resources and strengths that can contribute to early learning.

Open, honest, and respectful partnerships with families are essential to promote the best interests of children.

To build on families’ intimate knowledge of their children, strong relationships are vital.

**Building true partnerships with families**

Educators can become aware of the power dynamics evident in their communication with parents about children and the program. In communication with families, before making judgments educators can seek to understand families through respectful dialogue, negotiation and compromise.

Educators can offer equal access to all parents and be conscious and aware of their own personal reactions to families. Educators can give parents a real voice that does not threaten the educators’ professional identities. Educators and parents can negotiate shared meanings and understandings about the child, always being culturally sensitive about parents’ comfort level with sharing information about the family.

Educators can provide parents with meaningful involvement in the program that gives them a chance to impact decisions about how you work with and care and educate their child. Partnerships are understood to be equal - equal input, decision making and contributions.
Reflection: Families and Community

• How have families contributed to the development of the learning community?
• How do we make this possible for families whose first language is not English?
• How do we nurture and encourage contributions from home?
• How do we ensure our assessments reflect the diversity of cultures in our community?
• How do we nurture and encourage contributions from families of children with special needs?
• How do we invite and foster acceptance of diversity and integration of those with special needs within our community?

Finished Module 2

Next, please complete the questionnaire for Module 2 before you continue to Module 3. In the questionnaire you will be asked to answer the following questions:

1. How have families contributed to the development of the learning community?
2. How do we make this possible for families whose first language is not English?
3. How do we nurture and encourage contributions from home?
4. How do we ensure our assessments reflect the diversity of cultures in our community?
5. How do we nurture and encourage contributions from families of children with special needs?
6. How do we invite and foster acceptance of diversity and integration of those with special needs within our community?
7. What perspective of the child do you have?
8. How is that perspective reflected in your practice?
9. What assumptions are embedded in the way you look at children, you talk about children, you work with children?
10. Which sciences do you bring into your own image of the child? (e.g., child development, anthropology, history, genetics, biology)?
11. What views are missing from your understanding of who children are?
12. What meanings of words or concepts are key to your understanding of children?
13. What meanings are marginalized or silenced (‘othered’)?
14. How do these meanings lead to taken-for-granted assumptions about children?