



Making Meaning of a Flight Core Concept:

2.1 Image of the Child: A Mighty Learner and Citizen

How might this core concept be explored?

- In a **staff meeting** to support the program team toward looking at current practices in relation to the image of the child in *Flight*.
- As part of a **professional learning day**, when educators can work together to explore the image of the child as a mighty learner and citizen.
- As part of a **planning meeting** to help educators reflect on their image of the child and how it is visible in their practices, planning and interactions.

We all hold an internal image of the child. As Malaguzzi (1994) reminds us, we “cannot act contrary to [our own] internal image [of the child].” Our internal images are important because they direct how we are with children in everyday experiences—influencing how we plan, how we engage, how we talk about children, and how we interact with families. For this reason we must talk about our image and keep talking about it.

1. Uncovering the image of the child that is already part of our work

What words would you use to describe your image of the child?

- On sticky notes, ask each team member (educators and administrators) to write down 5 or more words (one per sticky note) that describes their image children.
- Ask each team member to say their words out loud. Without judgement, listen openly until each member has shared their words.
- As a group, organize the sticky notes into a word cloud, placing words that are repeated together.

2. Gaining more information about the image of the child

As a team, read section 2.1 of *Flight: Image of the Child: A Mighty Learner and Citizen*. We encourage educators to take turns reading aloud while others follow along.

- As you listen and/or read, highlight or underline words and phrases that stand out.
- Once the section is read, share the words or phrases that have been highlighted or underlined and explain why. Perhaps it was a word not heard before. Perhaps it was a phrase that had meaning for someone. Perhaps it was a phrase that someone would like to come back and discuss further.
- As the sharing unfolds, consider having a person record the words and phrases on a whiteboard or flipchart paper. You may begin to see some common phrases or words appear.
- Think further about the phrases and words. You might search for a definition of a word, or relate a phrase to another experience, or an article you read, or a workshop you attended. The point of this whole group conversation is to make meaning among yourselves. As a group, you may ask questions for further thinking. Not all questions must be answered right away.

3. Revisiting our image of the child

Look again at the words generated at the beginning of this session.

- As a group, discuss the words that you generated. Use some or all of the following questions/prompts to discuss as a whole team:
- What do the words tell you about how you view children?
- What surprises you? What confirms what you already thought?

- Search definitions for some words – especially the words that you use everyday. Surprisingly, when people search definitions, sometimes they discover the dictionary meaning is different from how they use the word in everyday language. If this is the case, what other word(s) would you select to replace them?
- What do you think is missing? Are there words that you might add after reading the section from *Flight*? Are there words you would like to remove?
- Are there words that you think should be used to represent your program?
- Which of these words would you use to describe educators? Why?
- Which words would you not use to describe educators? Why not?

4. Take away

Thinking about how you might take up and use this concept in your daily practice, consider the following to extend your reflection on practices.

- As a team choose a word (an image), or group of words (images) that you think should guide (or inform) how you “see” and respond to children and families in your daily work.
- Collect examples from daily practice when the word or words became visible to you. Examples may come from your observations of children in play, and/or an educator with a child or family. For example: Tamid demonstrated resourcefulness and creativity by adding pipecleaners to strengthen the base of his clay sculpture.
- Set the stage for everyone to share their observations at the next meeting. Discuss the thoughts, ideas, questions that arise from the shared observations – What images became more evident? Do these moments of practice surprise you? Challenge you? What moments would you want families to see? Explain why. What moments would you want to do again? Explain why.
- Are there words that you might add or remove after thinking about your daily practice.

****Note: The image of the child is an ongoing conversation that should be revisited and reworked several times over a year. Anytime, a program experiences change, challenges and joys, the image of the child is always at work and needs a close look.**

References:

Makovichuk, L, Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). *Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework*. flightframework.ca

Malaguzzi, L. (1994). *Your image of the child: Where teaching begins. Exchange, 3(94)*. <https://earlylearning.prn.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Your-image-of-the-child-L.Malaguzzi.pdf>