

# Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation

## VERMONT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Each and every young child (birth through Grade 3) and family in Vermont has diverse strengths rooted in their unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. They have gifts and abilities that should be celebrated and nurtured. Full participation means promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and early childhood professionals to gain the competence and confidence to positively impact the lives of each and every child and their family.

The Guiding Principles describe what individuals, organizations, and communities understand and do to realize the promise of each and every young Vermont child. They highlight explicit, intentional, and strengths-based practices that are respectful of and responsive to child, family, and community values, priorities, and beliefs. They are consistent with relevant state and national laws and policies. These principles articulate Vermont's commitment to fully include each and every child and their family in a continuum of meaningful experiences to ensure their health, mental health, safety, happiness, and success now and into the future.

### **We believe that each and every child . . .**

- Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.
- Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.
- Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

### **For each and every family, we will...**

- Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their children.
- Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners.
- Build caring communities that are accepting of differences and foster a sense of belonging.

### **For each and every child and their family, we will...**

- Promote understanding of the importance of inclusive and effective early childhood experiences.
- Build equitable access to opportunities, supports, and services.
- Acknowledge and address biases in ourselves and others and the importance of differences such as race, class, gender, family structure, ability, and sexual orientation.
- Advance policies, procedures, programs, and practices that honor and are supportive of each family's culture, strengths, structure, expertise, and preferences.
- Provide options, flexibility, and continuity within each community by working collaboratively within and across agencies, programs, and funding sources.
- Expand the number of early childhood professionals who are well prepared and reflect the diversity of the community.
- Draw upon evidence and research for practices that are responsive and appropriate to the child's culture(s), language(s), abilities, developmental level, identities, and needs.