



PROGRAM STATEMENT

Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services
November 2023



STRONGER TOGETHER

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WHAT IS PEDAGOGY?

Pedagogy is the ways that children learn and what an educator does to support their learning.

TELCCS supports the ideology that children learn best when they are interested and engaged in play and experiences that encourage and support active exploration and manipulation of materials. Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) develop and implement daily learning experiences that are based on documented observations of each child complimenting their knowledge and expertise of child development and learning. Children are viewed as competent, active, curious, and capable learners that are rich in potential.

We acknowledge that inequities and barriers exist for certain groups within our communities. TELCCS has dedicated resources, time, and training to hold ourselves accountable and demonstrate our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, Confronting Anti-Black Racism, and support of 2SLGBTQ+ families in our childcare programs. We aim to build a diverse and inclusive community where every child and family feels welcomed and valued, and where all voices are heard and respected.

Our programs support each child's personal well-being, health, safety, and nutrition with a team approach that includes Registered Early Childhood Educators, Child Care Aides, Supervisors, and support services, such as the Nutrition Services Unit, Asset Management Unit, Every Child Belongs, and Senior Management Team.

Daily learning experiences (activities) are created and adapted to reflect and support children's individual stage of development and interests. Consideration is given to each element of the children's day, indoor and outdoor play, active play, and quiet time to provide unique and valuable learning, developmental experiences, and opportunities that are supported by planned programs and child-initiated learning.

Our services are developed and organized based on the six (6) guiding principles of Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) and the four Foundations of Learning and Development (Ways of Being) from *How Does Learning Happen?*

HOW DOES LEARNING HAPPEN?

How Does Learning Happen?, Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, is a professional learning resource for those working in child care, and child and family programs. This resource promotes critical reflection and discussion and includes goals for children and programming expectations. It provides a framework for thinking about the environments, experiences, and interactions that bring out the best in children, families, and educators.

HDLH? identifies four (4) foundations that are important for children to grow and flourish to their optimal development.

The following chart outlines the Four (4) Foundations of Learning & Development from How Does Learning Happen? and the practices TELCCS implements to support children and families.

| The Four (4) Foundations of Learning & Development | How We Support the Foundations |
|--|--|
| Well-Being | In TELCCS programs we encourage mindfulness throughout the day by enabling children to have time to finish a task and practice new skills (i.e., learning to do up a zipper) and by moving through transitions in a small group format. |
| Expression | Teachers encourage children's self-expression through their play, art mediums; painting, clay creations, music and movement, the use of open-ended questions and by providing time for children to reflect, hypothesize and share their responses. TELCCS is supportive of children expressing themselves how they feel the most comfortable. |
| Belonging | <p>To support children and families to have a strong sense of belonging, educators develop inclusive environments and planned programs that reflect the diversity of the families, children, and communities they serve. This also includes addressing Truth and Reconciliation, combating Anti-Black Racism as well as supporting 2SLGBTQ+ families.</p> <p>Materials, photographs, posted material and resources reflect diversity in race, culture, family composition, abilities, etc.</p> |

| The Four (4) Foundations of Learning & Development | How We Support the Foundations |
|--|--|
| Engagement | Planned programs are developed to reflect the children's interests and individual development enabling children to choose the learning experiences, materials and play partners they want to engage with. Educators encourage and support children to make their own decisions, solve problems, experience logical consequences and hypothesis through their play to support children's feelings of engagement and value within the program and with others. |

EARLY LEARNING FOR EVERY CHILD TODAY (ELECT)

Early Learning for Every Child Today is a professional resource for use by early childhood practitioners that describes how young children learn and develop and provides a guide for curriculum in Ontario's early childhood settings. ELECT identifies Six (6) Guiding Principles developed from beliefs, values, experience, and current research findings. The Principles provide a guide that compliments, rather than replaces, specific curricular and pedagogical approaches.

The following chart outlines the Six (6) Guiding Principles from ELECT and the approach TELCCS uses in all children's programs.

| The Six (6) Guiding Principles | Our Approach to Each Principle |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Responsive Relationships | Educators build trusting relationships, have positive and nurturing interactions, take cues from children, reinforce positive social skills, and demonstrate positive role-modeling. |

| The Six (6) Guiding Principles | Our Approach to Each Principle |
|--|---|
| Learning Through Exploration, Play and Inquiry | Children are capable, competent, and curious learners. They learn best when they are engaged in play-based learning experiences and using materials that they are able to freely explore, manipulate, theorize, question, and share their thoughts and ideas. When children are having fun, they are engaged and learning. |
| Educators as Co-Learners | Educators learn with the children, asking meaningful and thoughtful questions, providing a variety of new and challenging materials, and learning experiences to enrich the children's learning. |
| Environment as Third Teacher | The play-based environments (playrooms, playgrounds, and centre) are designed to enable children to make choices and be independent. They stimulate learning and encourage skill development. They provide a natural, aesthetically pleasing, and calm place to learn as well as a variety of types of space for children to explore. |
| Pedagogical Documentation | A quality planned program is developed using documented observations of children throughout their day, input from families, and the knowledge and experience of the educator. Documentation may include written and photographed observations and children's creations (e.g., artwork, writing). |
| Reflective Practice and Collaborative Inquiry | Educators reflect on their own practices and collaborate through open discussion and enquiry with other educators to implement best practices and to ensure a high-quality early learning and care program. |

TELCCS PLAY-BASED LEARNING MODEL

TELCCS programs use a play-based learning program model to support children's optimal learning and development. Research shows that play is the primary way that all children learn. In TELCCS we believe children learn when they are engaged, active, interested, challenged, and having fun. Learning experiences are both planned and spontaneous based upon the children's interests and developmental needs. Programs support learning and development in all areas: physical, social/emotional, cognitive and language and literacy development.

Children also learn through repetition; they need many opportunities to explore and manipulate materials to figure out how they work, to develop and refine their skills and abilities and to gain knowledge. The more experiences and time children can play independently and with others, the more opportunities for learning take place.

THE VALUE OF PLAY

While children are engaged in play, they are learning and developing a variety of skills:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Emotional and social skills
- Learning new cognitive concepts
- Developing their small and large muscles through physical movement

Children learn when they engage in:

- pretend play
- creative and sensory experiences
- games and puzzles
- small and large group times
- physical play experiences
- singing
- story telling

THE ROLE OF REGISTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Our educators and supervisors are Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and are responsible for developing and implementing planned and responsive programs.

This is done by:

- observing and documenting daily activities and behavior of children
- developing and implementing planned daily programs with a wide variety of challenging and stimulating learning opportunities and experiences
- creating environments that enable children to actively explore and learn independently and with adult support
- supporting children's learning through positive interactions as play partners and co-learners
- sharing information and resources with parents
- partnering with the community to engage children to learn about and understand their world
- adapting the program and materials to ensure all children are able to actively explore and engage in play on their own and with their peers
- working with external partners to ensure the program meets the needs of children with extra support needs including implementing individual program plans
- working in collaboration with their team partners to evaluate, develop and implement the planned program
- being active, life-long learners

Our Supervisors, RECE's and Child Care Aids work in a team approach to provide for children's needs and to support their learning and development by:

- supervising children's play and daily routines
- documenting general care information
- following the child's lead to extend and enhance learning and development
- responding to children's individual needs
- developing positive, supportive relationships with each child
- demonstrating respect and empathy for children's emotions and challenges
- encouraging problem solving
- supporting the development of positive peer relationships
- establishing positive relationships and partnerships with parents
- modeling the behavior they wish to teach children
- establishing professional and positive relationships with their colleagues in the rooms and centres in where they work

PLANNED AND RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS

TELCCS values the benefits of a planned program. Educators document observations of children throughout the day in the children's individual Observation Tool to help track the children's interests and developmental needs. As part of the planned programming, materials and learnings that acknowledge Truth and Reconciliation, Confront Anti-Black Racism, support the 2SLGBTQ+ community and support those with varying abilities and intentionally and meaningfully incorporated.

ELECT's Continuum of Development describes predictable sequences of development for children from birth to eight years of age. The continuum assists educators in observing and documenting children's emerging skills, based on an understanding of child development and supports the creation of a planned and responsive program.

While a program plan is created weekly, Educators follow the lead of the child. Planned learning experiences are adapted by children as they play and explore, bringing new materials and ideas to their play. Educators also adapt this planned program to support children's spontaneity, abilities, and interests by adding materials, asking open-ended questions, and building on to the children's learning by providing new challenges and ideas.

Each room team meets weekly to reflect on the program and documented observations; ideas are discussed, and the program and environment is adapted to best meet the children's needs. Educators continually review how their programs and interactions support the *Four Foundations of Learning and Development* and the *Six Guiding Principles*. Centre supervisors provide additional support to ensure programs meet the Program Statement requirements. This is done through providing resources, training, observing programs, sharing information and resources with parents, interacting with both children and employees, and facilitating discussions on how the children are learning, what they need to learn and the best strategies to support them.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The children's play environments (indoor and outdoor) are set up in a child-friendly manner that encourages free exploration and manipulation of materials as well as organized learning experiences that they may engage in independently, with a peer or in a small or large group. The playroom furnishings and décor are chosen to reflect elements from nature (e.g. wood, plants) and are child-size for the comfort and safety of the children. An environment that provides for quiet, thoughtful play, as well as loud, active play are essential to support children's individual needs and ways of expression.

The materials in the rooms are set up in a manner that enables children to easily find

and return them independently. They provide a variety of stimulating and challenging learning experiences to engage children and to support all aspects of the child's development.

OUTDOOR PLAY – A CRITICAL PART OF LEARNING

In TELCCS, we value the learning opportunities as well as the health benefits that outdoor play provides children. Children in full day care are required by the Ministry of Education to participate in outdoor play for a minimum of two (2) hours a day, weather permitting. Children are supported in participating in outdoor play during all four seasons with educators building and adapting programming to each one. Educators closely monitor the weather and the children's activity levels to ensure their health and well-being. Areas of shade as well as drinking water are provided throughout the year.

The outdoor learning environment provides extended opportunities for all elements of learning, from physical activity, nature exploration, independent and cooperative games. Children's interactions with nature support their knowledge of science and nature and help them develop an understanding of the fragile nature of the environment, and how they can care for and nurture it. Learning is also extended to the local community through local walks or off-site activities for older children.

Our outdoor play environments provide space and opportunities for active and restful play, loud and quiet play, and individual and group play. Children are provided with a variety of opportunities to develop their large muscles skills as well as athletic skills, such as throwing, kicking, and catching a ball, riding a tricycle, and playing basketball, to support them to lead an active lifestyle for long-term health and wellbeing.

When children are unable to play outdoors due to weather conditions, alternate indoor active learning experiences are provided in a space identified for this purpose.

PROGRAM ENRICHMENTS

TELCCS programs aim to extend children's learning and development through the implementation of program enrichments. Program Enrichments are learning experiences that are presented on-site by professionals in their specific field to support children's learning. This may include, but is not limited to theatre and music, hands-on crafts, and physical movement experiences.

Parents are invited to share their skills, knowledge and abilities with their child and their peers. This may be achieved by reading a story or singing a song in their home

language, playing a musical instrument, or engaging children in a craft.

Planned program enrichments for each program are posted in advance for parent information and input.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Our goal is to encourage and support children to reach their optimal development and future lifelong success. Our play-based program is planned to enable each child to interact with materials, learning experiences, peers, adults, and the outdoors at their individual stage of development and through their own interests.

Educators will complete a screening tool for each child at age-specific identified intervals to help ensure they are meeting basic developmental milestones. Parents are encouraged to work with staff to complete this tool. An age-appropriate blank copy will be provided along with the completed tool to facilitate discussion of any areas that may need to be addressed.

At times, some children need additional support from specialists such as resource consultants, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, etc. If the child's educator feels that the child would benefit from additional supports, they will meet with the parent to discuss what services may be available and how they may be arranged. In TELCCS, we model the [Every Child Belongs](#) philosophy and welcome all children to participate in our programs in a meaningful way.

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

Children need the opportunity to explore their environment and discover their abilities. This sometimes involves testing limits and experimenting with social interactions that may include behaviour that is dangerous or inappropriate.

When negative or unacceptable behaviours occur, they are considered to be learning opportunities where educators support children in identifying and expressing emotions and issues appropriately. They establish limits and follow through with logical consequences when reasonable expectations are not met. Consequences of behaviour should be calmly addressed with children keeping in mind tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. This can include developmentally appropriate redirection strategies.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

In TELCCS, we support infants and young toddlers to develop self-regulation skills and

positive behaviours through the use of redirection. Staff will bring the child's attention to a different play area or material to minimize the child's opportunity to repeat or engage in unwanted behaviour and support them to experience more positive experiences with others.

Infants and toddlers are at developmental stages where they can't yet understand verbal direction concerning their behaviours and emotions and tend to be egocentric (at the "me" stage). Staff will reframe the stressful or emotional situation and redirect it into a positive one; for example, providing them with another toy or engaging them in a different and more positive learning experience.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Educators support preschool children problem solve, communicate their issue, or needs and use conflict resolution strategies to resolve issues with others. Educators support children to work through problems or anger by encouraging them to talk about their feelings and issues. Children learn to use strategies when they are actively involved in the solution.

Children are, by nature, problem-solvers. A problem-solving approach which meets the developmental level of children allows them think about the problem and develop a solution. This involves identifying the issue, thinking of alternatives, predicting consequences, and developing solutions.

PROHIBITED PRACTICES

All TELCCS employees and students are to use behaviour guidance strategies that support children to develop appropriate social and emotional skills and must comply with the TELCCS Program Statement.

TELCCS and the Child Care and Early Years Act prohibits the following practices:

- a) corporal punishment of the child,
- b) deliberate use of harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect,
- c) depriving the child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, or bedding,
- d) locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child,
- e) using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine the child if he or she has been separated from other children, or
- f) inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

One of the most important set of skills that children need for future success are those relating to self-regulation. This includes the ability to wait their turn, share materials, listen to others, demonstrate empathy and kindness, and communicate emotions and thoughts to others in a positive and constructive manner.

Viewing children as capable, competent, and curious is critical in supporting self-regulation. Most unwanted/negative behaviours are due to the inability to self-regulate due to skills that are not yet developed or those that need to be refined. When unwanted or negative behaviours are demonstrated, children are supported in learning how to manage their response by promoting the use of positive, developmentally appropriate strategies and techniques on a consistent basis.

Children are encouraged to respond in a positive manner and to apply those responses to resolve future situations. This can be achieved by demonstrating and supporting positive behaviours and through redirection and verbal support. Children will learn to feel and demonstrate empathy to others as they learn through their own experiences and observe adults role modeling positive social skills.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Research has identified five core competencies that lead to positive life outcomes. These include:

1. a positive sense of self,
2. the ability to practice self-control,
3. effective decision-making skills,
4. a moral system of belief of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and
5. positive connections with others.

As children begin to develop language skills and a better understanding and awareness of others, educators use a variety of strategies such as, conflict resolution, learning experiences, natural consequences, and redirection to support children's development of strong social skills. Communication skills and understanding support children to self-regulate by planning how to deal with stressful or difficult situations or suggesting their own consequences when they have acted inappropriately, such as, helping a peer reconstruct a broken creation or taking some time to be quiet and meditate with the support of educators.

RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between educators, children and families is very important. Research shows that the first three (3) years of life are the most critical to support brain growth and development. During this time, 90% of our brain mass is developed through the relationships we have with others.

In TELCCS, we value the importance of relationships between the educators/caregivers and children and families. We strive to develop a strong partnership with parents based on respect, trust, and a common goal of supporting children to reach their optimal outcomes.

CHILDREN IN DISTRESS

Educators and caregivers respond to children in distress in ways that support a trusting, caring and respectful connection with the child. Responding promptly to children in distress supports children to develop lifelong skills such as the ability to self-regulate, solve problems, communicate, and develop strong relationships based on trust. Children whose needs are promptly met also develop a strong sense of belonging, self-expression, and the knowledge that they are cared for and loved.

Responding to a child in distress may mean picking them up, talking or singing to them in a soothing voice, sitting in close proximity to them while engaging in their play, holding their hand, assisting them to solve a problem or a conflict, providing them with engaging materials or learning experiences, or providing for a need such as, food, rest, or a diaper change.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

When a child is having a challenging time and is displaying behaviours that may hurt them or others, educators may be required to remove other children from the space. This provides privacy and an opportunity for staff to support the child in resolving their issues. Additional educators will provide support and relief. Physical restraint is only used when a child may endanger themselves or others. If physical restraint is used, educators will document the interaction and notify the supervisor and parent/guardian. A plan will be developed to support the child.

ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS

Children's days are filled with lots of time to play and explore in the playroom and on the playground, but their day also includes a number of personal care routines such as mealtime, washroom, and cloakroom time. As children move through these routines each day, educators support children's learning through positive and supportive interactions. Children develop self-help and fine motor skills, an understanding of the importance of good health and hygiene, as well as communication and social skills while they interact with peers and adults.

Transition times, such as, to/from the playground or washroom, are designed to be safe, positive learning experiences for children. Children move from larger groups to small ones each with a staff member to support the children's physical and emotional well-being, facilitate individual learning, encourage trust and attachment, and support children's ability to manage routines and self-regulate effectively.

CHILDREN'S SLEEP AND REST TIMES

It is important to schedule time to rest and re-energize as children are continually active throughout the day.

INFANTS

As younger children require more frequent rests, infants rest according to their own individual schedules. Educators work with parents to determine a daily schedule of rest and monitor the child's individual needs throughout the day. Staff monitor resting/sleeping children regularly to ensure their safety and well-being.

For their safety and well-being, all infants are put to sleep in their individual cribs. Infants under one year of age are put to sleep on their back.

TODDLERS OR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Children attending a toddler or preschool program will be provided with a period of up-to-two hours per day to rest or sleep on their individual cot depending on their individual needs for that day. Quiet learning experiences are provided for children not sleeping after one hour of resting on their cot and as they gradually wake.

TECHNOLOGY

In TELCCS, we strongly believe that children learn by being engaged actively in play; the amount of screen time children participate in is limited. Video/DVD materials are only used to support children's learning and interests using materials related to their interests, such as, science and nature videos.

MUSIC

TELCCS programs provide children with a variety of opportunities to engage in music experiences to support an appreciation and understanding of music. This includes listening, singing, and playing musical instruments. Children are exposed to diverse types of music, including instrumental, classical, pop and culturally specific music. Opportunities are provided to listen to others sing or play musical instruments as well as to participate.

Educators use music to support children at various times throughout the day including during transition times. This can be done by singing familiar songs, playing soft music to communicate to children that it is rest time and to encourage physical and creative movement.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Our menus provide a wide variety of foods for children to enjoy. While the primary focus is providing nutritious food, mealtimes are also an opportunity for learning. Mealtimes enable children to interact with others, learn about different foods, learn their own likes and dislikes as well as develop self-help skills. Mealtimes provide a unique opportunity to build strong relationships and appreciation for new and different foods.

Our programs engage children in many learning experiences to support the importance of choosing healthy food options. Some centres have vegetable gardens that provide children with opportunities to engage in planting, caring, and harvesting the food, as well as creating healthy food items with the food they have grown. Children learn cooking techniques, food preparation, self-help, and social skills while they plan and prepare nutritious snacks to enjoy during their day and with families.

PARENT INPUT

Educators and parents work in partnership to ensure children's nutritional needs are consistently met. Information is gathered and shared regularly. Infant and toddler programs share information on daily/weekly charts that document the child's daily food and liquid intake along with general care items, such as, diapering and sleep times. Families are provided with documents to gather information concerning their children's nutritional and general care needs on a regular basis.

Families are encouraged to share any observations or changes that may take place with their child/ren's needs as they arise.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parent participation and involvement in their child's program is essential to ensure children's optimal learning and success. We aim to provide opportunities for parents to express their ideas, feelings, and concerns as partners in their child's learning and care.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to spend time in their child's program. Parent involvement also occurs through regular program enrichments, information sessions, workshops and program evaluations, and daily written and verbal communication. Play experiences and their links to learning are shared through our Weekly Program Plans, Individual Children's Observation Tool, and regular communication.

Parents are encouraged to share their observations of their child's learning and development with the staff and to document them in their child's observation tool.

Photos, diverse materials, the use of home languages and learning experiences relating to diverse families and people further support children and families' sense of belonging and engagement.

PARTNERING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

TELCCS partners with a wide range of community partners to support an integrated approach to early learning and care. As a City service, we pride ourselves on working collaboratively with other City departments to share resources and improve the quality of our programs and services to children and families. Some of our City partners include Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Libraries and Toronto Parks, Recreation & Forestry.

In addition to these partnerships, we have a strong connection with the education system

through shared spaces and communities. School boards have also implemented a play-based learning program that not only supports a seamless transition from care to the school system but also ensures the future success for children attending our programs.

TELCCS also has strong partnerships with a number of Ontario College and University Early Childhood Education Diploma and Degree programs. The partnership provides student placement opportunities that enables us to support future Early Childhood Educators. This also provides children with new learning experiences and enthusiastic interactions with the students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

TELCCS is committed to the ongoing professional development of all staff. All TELCCS staff participate in mandatory training as required by the CCEYA, 2014, Child Care & Early Years Act, 2014, Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and by the City of Toronto, including Standard First Aid & CPR Certification.

In addition, staff participate in position-specific training and learning to support their professional learning and development. This also ensures they have a strong understanding of current policies, procedures, and research materials. Registered Early Childhood Educators are also required to meet the Standards of Practice and Continuous Professional Learning requirements of the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE).

A yearly professional development training plan is implemented in response to current research in the early learning and care field, mandatory and legislated training as well as employee and parent feedback.

PROGRAM REVIEW & EVALUATION

TELCCS programs ensure they meet the CCEYA, 2014 regulations to provide high quality early learning and child care services to families. TELCCS strives to meet or exceed the City of Toronto's [Assessment for Quality Improvement \(AQI\)](#) in all programs. TELCCS implements an annual Parent and Child Survey also gathers information and feedback on the services we provide.

The program statement will be reviewed and signed off by all staff and students prior to commencing employment or placement with TELCCS and annually thereafter, and at any time, when a change is made.

RESOURCES/REFERENCES

1. Child Care & Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA)
2. How Does Learning Happen?
3. Early Learning for Every Child today
4. City of Toronto Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI)

Copies of the TELCCS Program Statement are provided to all families at time of admission and when any significant changes are made. This document is also available on the Toronto Early Learning & Child Care Services website www.toronto.ca/children/telccs for families and members of the public.

Approved by: TELCCS Senior Management
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