



PROGRAM STATEMENT

TORONTO EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE SERVICES

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OUR APPROACH TO EARLY LEARNING: Pedagogy

We believe that children learn best when they are encouraged and supported to play and be active. Our staff work hard to engage and offer learning experiences to children with the overall goal of having fun.

Our programs use a play-based learning program model to support children's optimal learning and development. Learning experiences are both planned and spontaneous based upon the children's interests and developmental needs. Our programs support learning and development in all areas: physical, social/emotional, cognitive, and language and literacy development.

Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) develop and implement daily learning experiences that are based on documented observations of each child, bringing their knowledge and expertise in early childhood development and education. 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.



EQUITY STATEMENT



Belonging is foundational in early childhood: children learn best when they feel safe, accepted, and represented; families engage more deeply when they know they are welcomed and respected; and staff thrive when they feel included and supported in their workplace.

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 mandate is to provide high-quality inclusive programs, particularly for vulnerable and high-risk communities, where families often face multiple challenges. Our centres strive to meet the needs of our families by linking them to services and resources as needed within their communities as required.

We make efforts to represent Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities in our program and play materials to support children's learning around inclusion and represent the diversity of families accessing our services. Program materials will always be available; children will be encouraged to learn and explore with any materials they are interested in. Materials will not be limited.

All of our child care centres feature our *Stronger Together* logo, which includes the 2SLGBTQI+ pride flag, the Medicine Wheel, a cultural and teaching symbol for Indigenous communities, and a Black hand shaped into a fist, representing solidarity with Black, African, and Caribbean communities.

We dedicate resources, time, and training for all employees to demonstrate the City of Toronto's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, make ongoing effort to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and welcome 2SLGBTQI+ families in our childcare programs and City-operated programs. We are also committed to supporting children with extra support needs.

PROGRAM STATEMENT

All child care centres in Ontario are required under the Child Care and Early Years Act to have a documented and publicly-available Program Statement, aligned to child care [programming goals](#) set by the Ministry of Education. The following pages outline our objectives and strategies used to meet these goals.



PROGRAM GOAL 1

To promote the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children



Objectives:

- Each child's personal well-being, health, safety, and nutrition is supported using a research-based, child-centered approach that is grounded in principles of equity and inclusion.

Strategies:

- Offer menus that provide a wide variety of nutritious foods for children to enjoy and support building relationships and appreciation for new and different foods, including foods and nutritional resources from different cultures.
- Support mealtimes that enable children to interact with others, learn about different foods, learn their own likes and dislikes as well as develop self-help skills and independence.
- Plan learning experiences that support the importance of choosing healthy food options, how to plant, care, and harvest food, and provide opportunities to learn cooking and food preparation techniques.
- Support a strong sense of belonging, developing inclusive environments and planning programs that reflect the diversity of the families, children, and communities we serve, aligned with our equity statement.
- Implement parent engagement and education programming that encourages families to learn and be involved in their children's development and growth.
- Create supportive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate programming to promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in care.

PROGRAM GOAL 2

To support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers, and staff



Objectives:

- Strong partnerships are developed with families based on respect, trust, and a common goal of supporting children to reach their optimal outcomes.
- Establish and maintain responsive and open communication between families and staff.

Strategies:

- Communicate regularly with families sharing observations, documentations, and reflections through conversations, collaboration, engagement activities, newsletters, events, written communications, etc.
- Create environments that are inclusive and respectful, and that evolve with emerging evidence and the needs of the diversity of communities in the City of Toronto.
- Provide and communicate supportive community resources to parents.

PROGRAM GOAL 3

To encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate



Objectives:

- Children are supported in learning how to communicate and navigate interactions by promoting the use of positive, developmentally appropriate strategies.
- Children will develop their ability to express their feelings and demonstrate empathy towards others as they learn through their own experiences and observe adult role models.
- Children will learn to develop social skills through developmentally appropriate problem-solving approaches.

Strategies:

- Provide children with opportunities to explore their environment and experiment with social interactions through play-based learning.
- Respond calmly while being aware of tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions, supportive of the unique needs of each child.
- Use developmentally appropriate redirection strategies to reframe a stressful or emotional situation and redirect it to a more positive learning experience.
- Model empathy and positive social skills including respectful and collaborative interactions with both children and adults.
- Support children in identifying their own emotions, the emotions of others, and in self-regulation by encouraging discussion about their feelings, planning how to deal with stressful or difficult situations, or suggesting their own strategies
- Treat difficult behaviours as learning opportunities.
- Use behaviour guidance strategies that support children to develop appropriate social and emotional skills; use of prohibited practices (as defined by the CCEYA, 2014) will not be tolerated.

PROGRAM GOAL 4

To foster children's exploration, play, and inquiry



Objectives:

- A play-based learning model will be used to support children's optimal learning and development.
- The environment, both indoors and outdoors, is considered a crucial component of the learning process alongside educators, families, and other children.

Strategies:

- Create opportunities to explore and manipulate materials and figure out how they work, to develop and refine their skills and abilities, and to gain knowledge.
- Create opportunities for play where the child can learn, practice, extend their skills, and have fun.
- Provide both indoor and outdoor environments that promote rest, leisure, exploration of cultural life, art, nature, science, and taking safe risks.
- Plan programs that follow the lead of the child through observation and engagement, including play and program materials that support children's learning around inclusion and represent the diversity of families accessing our services.

PROGRAM GOAL 5

To provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences

Objectives:

- Learning experiences will be both planned and responsive/spontaneous based upon children's curiosity and interests while also considering developmental needs.

Strategies:

- Plan programs that follow the lead of the child through observation and open-ended questions and that supplement the learning environment with new materials, challenges, and ideas to their play.
- Meet regularly with team(s) to reflect on observations and programming ideas to support adapting the environment to meet the children's interests, needs, and ongoing learning.



PROGRAM GOAL 6

To plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported and which is inclusive of all children, including children with individualized plans



Objectives:

- Children of all abilities and backgrounds, including children with individual plans, will be welcome to participate in and have access to our programs in a meaningful way.
- Children will be supported to reach their optimal development through a play-based program that enables children to interact with materials, peers, adults, and the outdoors at their individual state of development and social needs, influenced by their own interests.
- Programming will include intentional and reflective curriculum that recognizes a child's need to develop a positive identity, not only as individuals but also as members of the groups to which they belong.
- Design playrooms that reflect the role of the environment in learning ensuring all spaces are safe and accessible.

Strategies:

- Complete an evidence-based developmental screening tool for each child at age-specific identified intervals to help ensure they are meeting developmental milestones.
- Facilitate discussions with families to discuss any areas that may need to be addressed and any services or supports that may be available and how they can be arranged.
- Establish connections and work with services and resources for families and children that provide extra and tailored support (e.g. Every Child Belongs, etc.).
- Set up child care rooms and materials in a manner that enables children to easily find and return them independently.

- Provide a variety of stimulating and challenging learning experiences to engage children and support all aspects of development including those that require extra support.
- Extend children's learning and development through the implementation of program enrichments including theatre and music, hands-on crafts, physical movement experiences, and different types of educators through community partnerships.
- Plan and create learning environments for the full participation of all children.
- Ensure materials and learnings acknowledge the diversity of many communities, including Indigenous communities, African, Caribbean, Black communities, different cultures, people with different abilities, and the 2SLGBTQI+ community.



PROGRAM GOAL 7

To incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest, and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care



Objectives:

- Daily schedules will provide a variety of activities throughout the day that include both active and quiet experiences, incorporate indoor and outdoor play, and consider the individual needs and interest of the children.
- Children are supported in participating in outdoor play in all four seasons with educators building and adapting programming to each one. Alternate indoor active learning experiences will be provided when children are unable to play outdoors due to severe weather conditions.
- Principles of Land-Based Learning will be incorporated into both indoor and outdoor play, programming, and learning environments.

Strategies:

- Set up play environments (indoor and outdoor) to encourage free exploration and manipulation of materials as well as organized learning experiences that children may engage in independently, with a peer or in a small or large group.
- Create play environments that provide for quiet, thoughtful play, as well as loud, active play to support individual needs and ways of expression.
- Plan and implement curriculum in social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical domains for both indoor and outdoor experiences.
- Design transition times (moving to the playgrounds, nap time) in a way that fosters safe, positive learning experiences for children by encouraging trust and attachment and supporting children's ability to manage routines and self-regulate effectively.
- To support continual activity throughout the day, provide rest time with consideration given to the age and habits of each child.

PROGRAM GOAL 8

To foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children



Objectives:

- The program welcomes and encourages families' involvement in their child's learning and development by providing opportunities for families to express their ideas, feelings, and concerns as partners in their child's learning.

Strategies:

- Support family involvement through regular program enrichments, information sessions, workshops, daily written and verbal communications, and feedback from families.
- Facilitate ongoing communication with families to better support curriculum development and children's individual needs.
- Share children's learning with families through various family engagement opportunities.
- Ensure play experiences and their links to learning are shared with families through Weekly Program Plans, Individual Children's Observation Tool, and regular communication.
- Provide opportunities that support families to share information and observations of their child's learning and development, home life, practices and beliefs, abilities, and goals for their children with staff.
- Include photos, diverse materials, the use of home languages, and learning experiences relating to diverse families and people within programming to support children and families' sense of belonging and engagement.

PROGRAM GOAL 9

To involve community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families, and staff



Objectives:

- Strong community partnerships are formed to enable sharing of resources and collaboration to improve the quality of programs offered to children and families, and support full participation for each child as well as bridging the transition from early childhood settings to school.

Strategies:

- Engage community partners/agencies to share strategies and ideas to enhance programming as well as to exchange and provide resources and services to families in the program, including organizations that support our most vulnerable families.
- Provide support to families by linking them to community-based programs such as the library, newcomer associations, parenting, and community centres to support family engagement in local activities.
- Engage staff in local committees and activities that support a collaborative approach with community agencies and organizations and the public education sector, including other City services.
- Engage with post-secondary institutions to discuss emerging trends and challenges within the early childhood sector to support students with curriculum development and skills when entering the workforce.
- Provide student placement opportunities that support future Early Childhood Educators.
- Participate in pilot and research projects with partners and post-secondary institutions to further support vulnerable families and advance knowledge and learning within the sector.

PROGRAM GOAL 10

To support staff, home child care providers, or others who interact with the children at a child care centre or home child care premises in relation to continuous professional learning



Objectives:

- Program prioritizes and supports professional learning and development opportunities for those who interact with children at the child care centre or home care premises, whether they are mandated/mandatory or those of personal interest.
- Program is responsive to emerging trends and topics in childhood development and early childhood education while also intentionally prioritizing learning related to equity and inclusion.

Strategies:

- Provide position-specific learning to support professional development including a strong understanding of current policies, procedures, relevant research, and child care legislation.
- Provide and/or encourage opportunities for Registered Early Childhood Educators to meet the Standards of Practice and Continuous Professional Learning requirements set out by the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE).
- Provide opportunities for staff to participate in mandatory training as required by legislation and the City of Toronto.
- Develop and implement a yearly professional development training plan that supports current research, mandatory and legislated trainings, and incorporates employee and parent feedback.
- Review and support employee's professional learning goals through regular conversations, check-ins, and coaching.

- Provide opportunities for educators to explore professional development opportunities including both internal and external trainings, conferences, mentorship, etc.
- Engage staff in regular dialogue to review research, integrate emerging pedagogical approaches, and learn from each other's experiences to guide program development.



PROGRAM GOAL 11

To document and review the impact of the strategies set out above on the children and their families



Objectives:

- Centres regularly collect, analyze, and incorporate observations and information to adjust and adapt programs to ensure optimal learning for childhood development.
- Staff utilize various tools and supports to collect and interpret observations including developmental checklists.

Strategies:

- For infants and toddlers, share information on daily/weekly charts to document children's daily food and liquid intake, general care items, such as diapering and sleep times.
- Provide families with documents to gather information concerning nutritional, health, and general care needs during intake and on a regular basis through communication with families.
- Encourage families to share any observations or changes that take place with their child.
- Document observations from educators throughout the day to track children's interests and developmental needs.
- Use family feedback surveys and other engagement mechanisms to gather and incorporate feedback.
- Participate in the [City of Toronto's Children's Services Quality Assurance Program](#) as well as the Ministry of Education's [Licensing Inspections](#) and Toronto Public Health's [Infection Prevention and Control and Food Safety practices](#).

- Use Program Plans to document how pedagogy and philosophy will be translated and implemented in classrooms.
- Meet with educator teams regularly to reflect on program and documented observations to support continual quality improvement and learning and adapt to evolving programming requirements and learning environments.



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.	

The Four (4) Foundations of Learning & Development		How We Support the Foundations
Belonging		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. Materials, photographs, posted material and resources reflect diversity in race, culture, family composition, abilities, etc.
Engagement		Planned programs are developed to reflect 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.
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.

The Six (6) Guiding Principles	Our Approach to Each Principle
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.



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