

MISSION STATEMENT

The goal of the ELM Children's Centre as a childcare provider is to enlighten, encourage, and educate its students. We offer innovative and interactive learning opportunities that challenge and stimulate the children in a secure, respectful environment with professional, qualified and nurturing staff. Working together as a team ensures the fulfillment of the goal. Children are our only resource that will always increase in value!

Daily playground inspections are completed as well as an annual one completed by an inspector, daycare licensing is completed annually and health inspections are completed three times a year, menus follow Canadas Food Guidelines, children are supervised at all times, new innovations are put out regularly to enhance and stimulate the childrens interests.

INCLUSION

ELM Children's Centre Inc. works together with specialized services such as All Kids Belong, Thames Valley Children's Centre and Vanier Children's Services to support the individual needs of children and their families. Quality developmentally appropriate child care is also inclusive care. When childrens needs are being met according to their developmental levels, they do not stand out as having `special needs`. All children have needs and we ensure that strategies are implemented to effectively support each child in this respect. In the case of these children there will be a meeting held with the supports involved for a support plan to be set up to help the child achieve success in the program. If necessary, support hours through AKB may be needed.

PHILOSOPHY

The ELM Children's Centre Inc. provides a positive, inclusive, learning environment where all children can enhance their level of development through experiences under the guidance of specially trained staff. Every child is unique and they are made to feel valued and welcome. This will be attained by the following:

- Strong communication skills that will influence them for a lifetime;
- Respect, imagination and creativity through the programs and services that allow them to celebrate their individuality and embrace their commonalities;
- Interaction with and respect for others;
- Support for self regulation, observe children and help them to learn self calming skills, refer to the Think, Feel , Act document.

- Indoor and outdoor play daily as well as active and appropriate rest periods or periods of quiet activities;
- Indoor and outdoor areas for exploration and learning opportunities to encourage respect and awe for nature;
- Curiosity, initiative and independence using developmentally appropriate equipment;
- Development of partnerships with parents and the community, and professional development training opportunities for the staff.
- Providing nutritious meals and snacks adhering to Canada's Food Guidelines. These menus will be updated and changed as needed.
- Providing child initiated and adult supported experiences.

The Corporation philosophy, which provides criteria for parent participation, is the foundation of this organization. The basic structure and goals of the corporation creates the dynamics that allows for **excellence and a strong commitment** for parents to give of themselves for the benefit of all.

The program of the Centre is to provide a stimulating atmosphere for the child to learn through play. Provided for the child is equipment for creative and physical growth as well as social growth while learning a degree of independence in their own way. We feel the children learn and grow best by being actively involved in their environment. The children use play to develop independence, curiosity, creativity, resourcefulness, responsibility, and self worth.

ENVIRONMENTS AND DOCUMENTATION

Together with the children, a nourishing, vibrant classroom is created focusing on relationships and inquiry that supports the four foundations of learning: Belonging, Engagement, Expression, Wellbeing from How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years.

The environments we provide should support and provide the children with deeper levels of thinking and understanding. When setting up or changing our existing playspaces we need to do many layers of thinking: Physical space, activities engaged in the space and how the four foundations of belonging, engagement, expression and well being are supported by the space and what type of connections and relationships are also supported by the space?

We set up rich complex learning environments for the children . We closely observe and document their thinking. Together with coworkers and families we work to provide opportunities to expand on the children's thinking. These opportunities can be new materials in the environment, a challenge that is posed to the children or a well thought out question. This is challenging work that is exciting and full of surprises. We try to approach our work from a researcher's stance. We develop our theories about what a child may be thinking and about what theories the child is working with. The opportunities we choose

help us to dig deeper and gain better understandings about children and where to go next in our planning. They help us test our theories and in turn help the children to advance their theories or identify inconsistencies in their thinking. This can be done through questions, invitations, challenges or materials. This will help us to gain a better understanding about the children and what the next steps will be in our planning. Ask yourselves: What do the children know? What do they want to know? How can we support and provide that learning with genuine experiences?

We are co-learners with the children.

Document what you see the children doing and how they are learning through their environment and their play. Documentation can be supported with crafts, pictures and stories and can be displayed in the classroom as well as on See Saw for the parents.

Loose Parts as Intelligent Materials

Loose parts are materials that can be moved, pulled, carried, dumped, combined, lined up, dropped, projected, designed, redesigned, placed, turned over, used alone, used with other materials, transported and transformed and on and on and on. We try to choose loose part materials that are both from nature such as sticks, leaves, seed, buds, and wood cookies but also recycled materials such as buttons, boxes, cartons, bottle caps and tubes. We believe children need long periods of uninterrupted time to explore and become fluent in these simple yet complex materials.

Being both intentional in our consideration of the loose parts we choose but also open to the possibilities of how children will interpret our offerings is a challenge. We may see the potential of a material as a tool for categorizing but in the hands of a child it may become a prop for dramatic play or an expression of an experience. As educators we are exploring how to present materials, then hold back, observe, wonder and be wowed by our children. As educators we need to look through a lens of curiosity. As part of our professional practice we need to explore loose parts ourselves, re-connect with the child within to look at materials afresh. What possibilities do they hold? What will be opened up in the child by these provisions? What theories will be revealed in “messing about”?

The Environment as the Third Teacher

This expression is interpreted to mean that we set up our classroom environments to take on the role of a teacher. No matter what area of the room the children choose to engage in, the environment should support and provoke them into deeper levels of thinking and understanding. When you consider setting up your classroom or making changes to your existing classroom you will need to do multiple layers of thinking: Physical space, activities engaged in in the space and how the four foundations of belonging, engagement, expression and well-being are bolstered by the space and what type of relationships and connections are supported by the space?

Some Areas Needed:

Some of the areas will be combined or flexible as indicated by the schedule (i.e. a table could be used for fine motor at one time of day but also used for snacks and lunches at other times). Other areas will be found dispersed throughout the space (i.e. loose parts for counting in the construction area, weigh scale in the dramatic play area, and money stamps in the art studio could all be seen as possibilities for

supporting the exploration of math concepts).

Consider the following areas: Construction, Snacks/Lunch, Art studio, Sensory, Science, and Big Body Movement

Also consider alone space/calming space, Cognitive Area including math and pre-math concept exploration and literacy exploration, Dramatic Play, Story Book and Research Area, Storage, Storage for personal belongings of staff and children (including comfort toys, sleep toys, water bottles...), storage for items that must remain out of children's reach (i.e. emergency medication, disinfecting solutions, first aid items...), small group gathering space and whole group gathering space.

Considerations:

Flow, existing structures, pathways to the outdoors, floor coverings, visible boundaries, colour, fabric and transparent materials, shelving, partitions and screens, ages of the children, mixed age grouping, multi-cultural diversity representation that is authentic and gender sensitive and relevant

Once you have set up the physical space ask yourself:

1. Are all materials easily accessible, aesthetically organized, and inviting?
2. Do all areas have loose parts (open-ended materials) readily available, organized and displayed in an inviting way?
3. Does the room have many diverse elements of texture, shape, and the natural world to invite exploration and discovery?
4. Does the room have many opportunities for transporting, combining, and transforming materials?
5. Does the room have visual images representing a range of roles and cultural expressions to cultivate comfort with differences?
6. Are there many representations of children's lives and interests around the room (photos, sketches, objects with stories)? If the program has not yet begun, is there a plan for where and how these will be honoured as they are brought in or produced throughout the year?
7. Is there flexibility in the space, allowing for expansion when many children are working in the same area?
8. Are there minimal restrictions to moving in and out of areas (both materials and children)?
9. Are there places for physical activity and power?
10. Are there opportunities for adventure and risk taking?
11. Are there spaces that invite children to connect with their families?
12. Is the community represented in this space?
13. When I walk into this room do I get a sense of who lives in this space and is it obvious what they are currently thinking, wondering and inquiring about? Do I see evidence of their theory making? If the program has not yet begun, is there a plan for where and how these will be honoured as the year unfolds?

Items that help build awe, wonder and interest:

Mirrors, secondary lighting, fabric, textured materials, natural materials, loose parts/intelligent materials, “real” items vs. toy replications (i.e. real compass vs. toy compass, real dishes vs. plastic toy dishes...), ways to explore the properties of light (i.e. overhead projector, rope lighting, flashlight ...)

Slow down, listen and observe. Skillful ongoing observation will act as a catalyst for changes in the environment.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPECT

Our goal at ELM Childrens Centre is for every interaction and exchange we have with a child and their family to be authentic and respectful with the power to form a strong positive relationship. We will achieve this by asking ourselves:

Am I present? Am I bringing myself fully to this interaction with this child? Is this interaction with this child and this family going to promote their sense of belonging? Will they feel respected, valued and heard?

Our daily actions support the image of the child as competent, capable, curious, rich in potential and capable of complex thinking. Ask ourselves:

Am I speaking respectfully to this child? Am I supporting and honouring his or her competencies by my actions?

This also applies to our coworkers and our families.

Regular staff meetings help the staff to work together on improving relationships with each other, the children and the parents. See saw is also being used to communicate to parents as well as verbal communication at the end of each day.

SELF REGULATION

Self regulation refers to how efficiently and effectively a child deals with a stressor and then recovers.

When children are calm, focused and alert they are best able to control their emotions, pay attention, ignore distraction and control impulses. They also find it easier to understand consequences for their actions as well as understand what others are thinking and feeling therefore displaying empathy for others.

Stress plays an important factor in self regulation. There are five primary sources of stress in childrens lives today: biological, emotional, cognitive, social and prosocial. We need to look at all five levels as they all influence each other. Some children are stressed by too much noise, visual stimulation or strong smells. Others can be stressed by too much junk food or sugar. Not enough sleep or exercise can be a huge stressor. Negative emotions like fear, anger, shame or sadness can make a child struggle. Group activities and certain kinds of cognitive challenge can stress a child as well. And lastly, children find it hard to deal with other childrens feelings or needs.

Our goal is to support the children with self regulation. We will achieve this through daily observations

of the childrens which will help us determine which stressors, if any, a child may be dealing with. We need to help reduce the child's overall stress level, help them become aware of what it feels like to be focused and alert, and teach them what they need to do in order to return to being calmly focused, as well as what experiences they may need to avoid.

The Think, Feel and Act document can support us in helping self regulation.

Questions to consider:

What can I do to support a child in self regulation?

How can I change the environment to reduce a child's stress levels?

How do I help a child recognize when they are over or under stimulated?

How can I help a child determine which activities will calm them and which activities they need to limit?

OUTDOOR PROGRAM AND REST PERIODS

All children benefit from outdoor physical activity as well as appropriate periods of rest and quiet time. At ELM Childrens Centre we ensure the children spend at least 2 hours a day outside, weather permitting, engaged in physical activities. We ensure that the playspace is maintained by doing daily inspections and that the children are encouraged to join the teacher organized activities provided as well as use gross motor skills on the bicycles, riding toys and climbers. We observe the children's needs to provide the best experiences for their outdoor playtime.

At ELM Childrens Centre the children also benefit from a rest period. For children who still have an afternoon nap, individual cots are provided with sheets and blankets. The children are supervised during sleeptime and visual sleep checks are performed. The rest period does not exceed two hours in length. If a child does not nap anymore they are expected to rest quietly for about one hour and then will engage in quiet activities until the end of the rest period. Special sleep arrangements are considered at the parents request.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Ongoing communication with the parents is a very important goal at ELM Childrens Centre. We like the parents to feel involved in what goes on at the centre. We will achieve this goal and engage the parents by posting pictures of the days activities on our facebook page, on see saw and also posting a variety of pictures and documentation at the centre. We talk to the parents in the morning about how their child's evening has been and in the afternoon about the activities their child engaged in throughout the day. We have an open door policy so the parents are welcome to observe the program and the many activities that are provided throughout the day. We provide monthly newsletters letting the parents know of upcoming events, fieldtrips or activities we may do.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Our goal at ELM Childrens Centre is to have knowledgeable staff with up to date training and resources. To achieve this goal the staff at ELM Childrens Centre are expected to do workshops and training on a regular basis. Information will be shared with other staff at regular staff meetings and

documentation on staff workshops will be kept in the staff files as well as in each staff CPL portfolio required for the College of ECE. Updated First aid/CPR training is mandatory for every staff working at the centre. Postings of available workshops are on staff bulletin board as well as emails of upcoming workshops are shared with staff. All staff with their ECE diploma are required to register with the College of ECE.

IMPACT OF STRATEGIES

At ELM Childrens Centre we will be able to see the success in the whole program using How Does Learning Happen, Elect and Think, Feel and Act by observation, parent feedback and evaluations of the staff and program. As we do our observations, and documentation we will see what provocations are successful for the children and which ones may need to be adjusted in some way. Information sharing with the families will help us to achieve our goals and be successful.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

To meet the goals and objectives of our corporation, we:

- Re-evaluate regularly to reflect changes within the Child Care and Early Years Act and ideologies of Early Childhood Education.
- Encourage attendance at workshops for both staff and parents to stimulate new ideas, and reinforce present program content. Documentation of any workshops completed will be kept in staff files. Information will be shared at staff meetings and observations done to ensure proper protocol.
- A monthly newsletter, upcoming events and news of each child's program. Everyone is invited to contribute to this monthly newsletter.
- Communication through the app See Saw, shares aspects of the childrens days as well as relaying messages to the parents.
- Arrange board meetings to discuss the running of the organization. All parents are encouraged to attend these meetings on a regular basis to keep lines of communication open between home and school, to develop a support group for parents, and to make new friends in the community. Please feel free to contact Board members or Administrator or Program Supervisor if you have any questions or concerns.
- Annual playground inspections and fire alarm inspections are completed. Iiter and Ecer rating scales are done annually on the programs. Health Inspections are completed three times a year and our Ministry licensing is completed annually.

