

Highlands Early Learning and Child Care Centre



Program Statement

About our Centre

Highlands Early Learning and Child Care Centre was re-opened following the closure with a private operator in October 2003. We are located in Emsdale on Highway 592 and sit just in front of Evergreen Heights Education Centre. We provide early learning education to children beginning at 15 months and continue through until they begin school, as well as provide an after school program to children that attend Evergreen.

We are a child and family centred program with a homelike atmosphere that is welcoming to everyone. We have forged strong relationships with the local community and the school by hosting special events, having visitors and including community partners into our daily program. We actively participate in community events such as the Santa Claus parade, Fall Fair and some school events as well as larger organized events such as the Let's G.O.! Challenge and *Kids Helping Kids Walkathon*. Highlands is open Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

The Program Staff at Highlands are dedicated to providing *every child* with an enriching, caring and accepting environment that supports each child in reaching their fullest potential.



Philosophy

Our philosophy at Highlands Early Learning and Child Care Centre is to provide a safe, secure, healthy and enriching environment for the children and act as partners in care with their families.

Through the guidance of registered early childhood educators (RECEs) embracing *How Does Learning Happen?* and emergent curriculum, children are given opportunities through play that stimulate curiosity, initiative and independence.

Active learning through play enhances children physically, intellectually, creatively, emotionally and socially.

Each child is treated with respect and accepted as an individual through positive adult-child interactions.

The learning environment provides children with opportunities to make choices and decisions through inquiry and develop conflict resolution skills that assist in lifelong learning.

Interaction with other children expands social and communication skills and supports the development and understanding of empathy.

Throughout the day a consistent, predictable and flexible daily routine that supports the four foundations of learning (*How Does Learning Happen?*) enables children to make choices and express and explore their interests. Children have the opportunity to play independently or work together in small and large groups.

Belonging

Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world. Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them.

Our Program Staff will support positive, caring and respectful relationships between children, staff and families by;

- Ensuring every child is given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility, social skills and learn about diversity and inclusion by understanding and recognizing that all children are individuals and have unique and valuable contributions to offer in all situations. By using and encouraging language that labels feelings and emotions and implementing the *Seeds of Empathy Program*, we support children’s learning of empathy and acceptance.
- Understanding that the skills of conflict resolution are important to lifelong learning, all children are seen as competent individuals and are supported in their role as active participants in resolving conflicts by following *Six Steps to Conflict Resolution*.
 - 1 Approach calmly, stop any hurtful actions to oneself, others or the environment
 - 2 Acknowledge the children’s feelings
 - 3 Gather information
 - 4 Restate the problem: “So the problem is...”
 - 5 Ask for solutions and choose one together
 - 6 Be prepared to give follow-up support
- Developing close relationships with the children during one on one times, getting to their level, listening, giving them time and participating in their play, to better understand their emotional and physical needs so that we can respond in a more individualized way.
- Creating an inclusive program for children of all abilities that includes incorporating goal oriented plans and making necessary changes to ensure full participation in our program. Program Staff will review goals regularly and when they are updated. We are dedicated to working collaboratively with families, internal and external agencies and to provide the resources required for children to achieve success for lifelong learning.
- Being flexible and supportive of children while they make transitions within our daily routine. This includes time being given for children to settle in for the day, eat their meals or get some rest and have the opportunity to gain optimal learning from their play at their own pace and reflect on their experiences.
- Extending an invitation to all community members, local businesses and organizations and families to visit, participate and share their extensive knowledge, skill, culture and unique contributions. These relationships are supported based on the individual needs and availability and represented in our program through pictures, related items, books, displays, newsletters and open discussion.
- Creating an environment that stimulates inquiry, curiosity and learning by being engaged in the children’s learning. Also by providing a variety of open-ended materials that are based on their interests, being co-learners and ensuring that these opportunities are provided throughout every part of their day. Through documentation and daily reflection Program Staff will identify areas and materials requiring rotation to maintain motivation and interest.

Well-Being

Every child is developing a sense of self, health and well-being. Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self.

Our Program Staff will promote early experiences that will encourage lifelong physical and mental health and well-being by;

- Recognizing that participating in professional learning and development is a direct way to support children and families. The Program Staff are committed to continuous learning through the College of Early Childhood Educators and ongoing training/development of *How Does Learning Happen?*, Seeds of Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Standard First Aid and Infant Child CPR and situation specific training. They connect with community partners on a regular basis to keep abreast of current supports available.
- Ensuring that all new Program Staff, students and volunteers complete and receive a clear Vulnerable Sector Check that will be completed on or before every fifth anniversary after the date of the most recent check. An Offence Declaration will be completed every calendar year except the year in which the Vulnerable Sector Check is obtained. All information contained in the Vulnerable Sector Check will be kept confidential and only discussed with the person named on the document.
- Ensuring that all children are supervised by an approved program staff at all times and that at no time will a child be left without supervision. While staff/child ratios are permitted to be reduced during arrival/departure and rest time to no less than two thirds of the required number, no reduced ratios are permitted while outdoors.
- Releasing the child only to persons approved by the family and may at any time question the release of a child into the care of any person who appears incapable of caring for them.
- Creating emergency plans and procedures for fire, lockdown and severe weather; and documenting the practice drills.
- Submitting all Serious and Enhanced Serious Occurrence Reports by the supervisor or designate in the Child Care Licencing System to the Ministry of Education Early Years Division as defined in the Child Care and Early Years Act. A Serious Occurrence Notification Form will be posted at the centre for 10 days following a serious occurrence to support increased transparency and access to information for families. An annual report will be completed and kept on file.
- Completing annual fire inspections, unscheduled inspections by the Health Inspector of our kitchen facilities and program, adhering to the Safe Water Drinking Act as required (water sampling, reporting and flushing), and the immediate compliance with any orders or changes deemed necessary by the appropriate regulating bodies. All required information is posted.
- Notifying the local Children’s Aid Society directly and immediately in the event that abuse or neglect is suspected and if the child may be in the need of protection. Everyone who works closely with children is required by law, the “Duty to Report”, to report suspected cases of child abuse including physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or neglect.

Physical Well-being

- Adopting and implementing the *Healthy Environment Eating Tool (HEET)* supported and guided by the local Health Unit and under the direction of a Registered Dietician in addition to following the Canada's Food Guide. Combining these recommendations will ensure that all children will receive the highest level of nutrition within our program as well as positive role modeling and a stress free eating environment. Children are able to make choices of what they eat and how much, serve themselves and determine when they are finished their meal. We recognize this is an effective way to promote a healthy relationship with food and future health. We strive to accommodate dietary or religious food requirements and restrictions for children in our programs. Annual anaphylactic training will be provided to all Program Staff, students and volunteers. If an anaphylactic allergy is newly identified, the parent/guardian will complete an Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan Form which will be posted in the necessary program areas, Program Staff, students and volunteers will be notified and training will be provided by the parent/guardian to Program Staff, students and volunteers and reviewed annually or when a substantive change is made to the policy, plan or procedure.
- Administering prescription medication that is prescribed by a physician or nurse practitioner in the original container that clearly indicates the child's name, name of medication, dosage, date of purchase and instructions for storage and administration. The parent must sign and complete a Medication Consent form indicating the times for administration as well as the dosage. Children are permitted to carry their own prescription medication (epinephrine, inhalers) if it is indicated on the child's medical plan by the family and supervising medical professional, otherwise it will be contained in a locked container and out of reach of children.
- Providing children the opportunity of outdoor play for at least 2 hours per day weather permitting. We ensure that the outdoor learning environment is safe and free of hazards. An annual inspection by a certified playground inspector is completed along with our own daily, monthly and seasonal inspections. We aim to naturalize our outdoor learning environments to increase the connection to nature and create intentional opportunities to support all children's abilities while providing challenges and active play. The outdoor learning environment is an extension of our program and by defining play spaces it allows for choice and self-directed play. Providing a safe and stimulating outdoor environment supports children's autonomy and sense of competence as they take risks, learn about self-regulation and social interactions. Program Staff will provide loose parts, materials and activities that encourage children to take calculated risks and will not inhibit a child during exploration.
- Ensuring that each child has the opportunity to rest or sleep that will not exceed two hours on their own dedicated cot with bedding. Children that do not sleep are engaged in quiet activities to ensure that they get the time they need to renew their energy for the remainder of the day.
- Ensuring that all minor accidents and observations are documented and are signed by the supervisor and reporting staff. The completed report will be signed by and provided to the parent within 48 hours and a copy retained for the child's file.
- Reporting immunization information and communicable diseases of children, Program Staff, students and volunteer's to the local Health Unit and adhering to their recommendations, policies and procedures.
- Assessing and documenting the health and well-being of children throughout the day. When necessary, the child will be isolated from the other children. Program Staff will contact the family to arrange for the child to be picked up and excluded from the program due to ill health including fever, communicable disease or the inability to participate fully in the program due to illness. Children that are excluded from the program are permitted to return following the guidelines of the local Health Unit and/or are symptom free for 24 hours.

Self-care

- Supporting children with opportunities to practice self-care and self-help skills based on each child’s capabilities throughout the daily routine and activities. This includes but is not limited to, visual and verbal cues, space to complete the tasks, extra time and use of comfort items, while dressing themselves, washroom routines, rest time and meal times.
- Understanding that all children and families are unique and at times require a variety of supports in times of stressful and challenging circumstances. Information regarding family supports, services and opportunities are posted and sent out regularly in newsletters for all families to review. Additional information and appropriate referrals will be provided upon inquiry.

Self-regulation

- Supporting all children as co-regulators in times of need or distress by providing the means necessary; identifying feelings, emotions and actions, using a gentle voice and offering physical comfort to help them recognize and develop the ability to self-regulate.
- Providing an environment that supports all children’s varied sensitivities by incorporating items that will help them maintain a calm, focused and alert state such as; sensory items, the ability to adjust or maintain light, temperature and noise levels.

Engagement

Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses. Early childhood programs provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry.

Our Program Staff will foster children’s engaged learning through play that happens through natural curiosity by;

- Designing the indoor and outdoor learning environments with defined play spaces and open ended materials to allow children to explore, create, manipulate, problem solve and investigate. Materials and activities are planned daily through observations of the children’s interests. Documentation such as learning stories, pictures and masterpieces are displayed and evident throughout the learning environment.
- Participating in the children’s play as co-learners and co-investigators as well as stepping back to observe. This allows for ongoing documentation, opportunities to “scaffold” the learning, support collaboration and independent play and identify areas of interest. Children collaborate with Program Staff to assist in choosing materials based on their own experiences and interests.
- Being flexible within the daily routine to limit interruptions and transitions and to maintain simplicity and opportunity for children to engage in sustained, complex play and inquiry.
- Offering opportunity for further exploration and wonder by asking questions such as “I wonder how we could make this work?” or “What can we make this do?”
- Creating relationships with families and communities and sourcing ideas and materials to add to the learning environments that would reflect the children’s everyday lives and culture.
- Providing children of all abilities equal experiences and opportunities to be fully engaged in the program by being flexible and providing adaptations, devices or equipment in consultation with families and community partners when necessary.

Our Program Staff will foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with families about the program and their children by;

- Communicating openly and with respect on an ongoing basis while maintaining confidentiality.
- Keeping the family well informed on all aspects of their child's day regarding nutrition, sleep, activities and changes in routine.
- Being honest, sincere and genuine with the family will help establish healthy relationships and partnerships.
- Greeting the child and family upon arrival and offering support during difficult times.
- Empathize and demonstrate compassion while respecting their point of view by having a listening attitude.
- Choosing a mutually agreeable time and method to communicate challenges their child may be facing while acknowledging the child's strengths.

Expression

Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways. Early childhood programs foster communication and expression in all forms.

Our Program Staff will support an approach that emphasizes listening, responding to, and building on child-initiated communication and ideas by;

- Understanding that communication happens in many forms such as verbal and vocal exchanges, through gestures, creative expression and body language. By providing children with space, time and a variety of opportunities and materials and using documentation as a tool, it will allow for staff to gain insight and for opportunities for reciprocal communication.
- Recognizing that each child comes from a diverse cultural and social background. Combining these perspectives into daily activities will help to create a sense of comfort for the child and awareness for others. Encouraging families to share ideas or objects such as pictures and materials, help our program to reflect their cultural experiences.
- Demonstrating an understanding that every child is capable, curious and competent; and understanding that they have complex thoughts that can be explored through a wide variety of experiences. Giving the children full attention and engaging in an authentic reciprocal exchange validate their ideas and efforts so they know they are equal partners.
- Providing opportunity to revisit thoughts and ideas to extend their understanding. This will be achieved through conversation, documentation, pictures and creative expression.
- Participating in play as a co-learner allows opportunity to facilitate communication between children by assisting them with expressing themselves to one another by labelling gestures, emotions and situations and accepting and respecting a child's thoughts and feelings, even if they are angry or negative, without being critical or judgemental. Example: Susy makes a high pitched sound when another child takes her toy. She can be supported by saying to the other child "Susy is telling you she is playing with that."
- Respecting families and communities diversity by supporting multi-languages in print, gesture, sign or verbally and by providing materials throughout the environments such as books, symbols, pictures or music.
- Continuous reflection on their own communication strategies, collaboration with community partners and families. This is achieved through self-reflection, team meetings, program reflections and parent satisfaction surveys.

- Incorporating language and literacy strategies into all elements of the day, interactions and learning environments by including the use of “letterlinks”, labelling shelves and toy containers with words, pictures or symbols and news board.

Behaviour Management

- We promote self-esteem by protecting the emotional and physical well-being of children in our program, ensuring consistency with respect to the setting of limits for children. Program Staff consider external sources in behaviour management plans and practice a common philosophy of permitted behaviour practices; such as redirection, getting to their level and speaking to them in a developmentally appropriate way or suggesting what they can do.
- Prohibited practices include:
 - Corporal punishment (e.g no hitting, slapping, spanking or physical restraints)
 - Any harsh or degrading measures that would cause humiliation or undermine a child’s self-respect
 - Deprivation of a child’s basic need including food, shelter, clothing or bedding.
 - Confinement

Administration

- Our program is involved with community colleges and accepts students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program, high-school co-op students and community placement volunteers. Students and volunteers will be supervised at all times by the program supervisor or designate. They will not be counted in staffing ratios and only our Program Staff over the age of 18 will have direct unsupervised access to the children in our care.
- All new Program Staff, students and volunteers will review the program statement upon hire and prior to interacting with children sign the Program Statement Implementation Policy. The program statement will then be reviewed annually or when the document has been modified.
- With input from the Program Staff, the program statement will be reviewed annually by the supervisor to make any necessary changes or revisions to accurately reflect the best practices of our program.
- The program supervisor will ensure that all of the approaches set out in this program statement are implemented in the operation of the program and that each Program Staff will be monitored monthly. Observations will be addressed, recorded and will be reflected in the employees annual/appropriate performance review.

December 2017