

Highlands Early Learning and Child Care Centre



Program Statement

Program Statement:

This program statement outlines how Highlands Early Learning and Child Care Centre implements its program, grounded in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA) and guided by the four foundations of *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*. We believe that every child is a competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential individual. Our program fosters a sense of belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement, where children are given the support, encouragement, and opportunity to explore, learn, and grow at their own pace.

Guiding Principles:

Our program is based on the following core principles, developed by CCEYA and *How Does Learning Happen?*:

Child-centred Learning: We prioritize children's interests, strengths, and needs, recognizing that children are active learners and co-creators of their learning.

Play-based Learning: We believe that play is responsible for learning in early childhood. We provide rich and varied play experiences that encourage exploration, creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction.

Responsive Relationships: We foster warm, responsive, and reciprocal relationships between educators, children, and families, recognizing that these relationships are unique and essential for children's healthy development and learning.

Inclusive Environment: We create an inclusive and welcoming environment where every child feels valued, respected, and supported. We celebrate diversity and provide accommodation to meet the unique needs of all children.

Implementation based on the Four Foundations of How Does Learning Happen?:

Our program is designed to reflect the four foundations of *How Does Learning Happen?*: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression.

1. Belonging:

How We Implement It: We create a warm and welcoming environment where children, families, and educators feel a sense of belonging and connection. We prioritize building strong relationships through:

Welcoming rituals and routines: We have established routines that create a predictable and comforting environment.

Family engagement: We actively involve families in our program through regular communication, events, and opportunities for participation.

Celebrating diversity: We celebrate the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and languages of all children and families in our centre.

Individualized attention: We provide individualized attention and support to each child, ensuring that their unique needs are met.

Providing space: We provide each child with a designated space for a sense of comfort and security to store their personal items and that is identified with their own unique Letterlink.

Creating a familiar and comforting environment: We incorporate items and décor that are both common placed items (familiar home items such as clothing for dress up, dishes, tools etc.) as well as more specific items such as family photos, children's artwork and creations, and children's personal items.

2. Well-Being:

How We Implement It: We promote children's physical, emotional, and mental well-being by:

Providing a safe and healthy environment: We maintain a clean, safe, and stimulating environment that supports children's physical and emotional well-being.

Supporting healthy eating and active living: We offer nutritious meals and snacks and encourage active play.

We support children to become competent eaters by practicing responsive feeding by responding in a supportive and appropriate way. This supports the child's self-regulation and a growing sense of self, helps children develop eating competence by enjoying a variety of foods, exploring new foods, and respecting their hunger and fullness cues.

Responsive feeding is a mutual relationship between a child and educator based on trust.

Spending more time outside and supporting rich play opportunities provides children with profound developmental benefits and a foundation for lifelong appreciation of the outdoors. Our outdoor spaces offer children ever-changing conditions and loose parts that allow their imagination to shape play. Loose parts are materials that children can move around, such as sticks, rocks, mud, water, tarps, and crates. We support experiencing play in all different weather conditions, such as the wind, rain, or snow.

Respecting individual needs: We respect each child's individual needs for rest, comfort, and self-care.

Promoting emotional regulation: We support children in developing emotional literacy and self-regulation skills by supporting their emotional needs, helping them learn how to

identify and express their emotions and provide tools (breathing techniques or providing them with the language) and opportunities to learn what works for them (physical contact, quiet spaces etc.). We support all children uniquely and at their level, free of judgement.

We implement the Seeds of Empathy Program to children 2.8-3.8 years old (children entering kindergarten the following year) which is a 30-week program involving literacy circles specific to feelings and emotions and observing the “teacher” (baby) that visits throughout the duration of the program. During the visits, the children experience the baby expressing their emotions and learn what those emotions are and why, and how the parent supports the baby. Learning is extended on with activities, songs, and play, encouraging children to label and reflect on their own emotions while also becoming aware of others’ emotions.

3. Engagement:

How We Implement It: We provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences that spark children’s curiosity and encourage exploration. We achieve this through:

Emergent curriculum: We follow an emergent curriculum approach, where learning experiences are based on children’s interests and ideas, and we are all seen as co-learners.

Open-ended materials and activities: We provide open-ended materials and activities that encourage creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Loose parts are foundational in our program, both inside and outside, giving children freedom and opportunity to explore all possibilities.

Meaningful experiences: We offer a variety of learning experiences, including indoor and outdoor active play, arts and crafts, music, and movement, sensory, social, language and literacy activities, and understanding the unique ways that each child participates and contributes.

Documentation and reflection: We document children’s learning through observations, photos, and videos, and use this documentation to reflect on our program and plan for future learning experiences. Using these tools, we can see each child’s unique interests, needs and abilities and support them in the learning environment and program planning.

4. Expression:

How We Implement It: We provide children with numerous opportunities to express themselves creatively and communicate their ideas. We encourage expression through:

Language-rich environment: We create a language-rich environment where we encourage children to communicate their thoughts and feelings without pressure.

Creative arts: We provide opportunities for children to express themselves through art, music, drama, and other creative mediums. We focus on the process of the experience and not the end-product to promote and support creativity and individuality without influence.

Storytelling and literacy: We encourage storytelling and literacy development through reading, writing, and dramatic play. Throughout the programs' environment there are materials and activities to support the development of preliteracy skills, such as pictures, telling stories, building vocabulary through discussions, books and "Letterlinks" that are specific to each child to help them identify their personal spaces, such as their cubbies.

Respectful communication: We listen attentively and empathically to children's ideas and perspectives and respond respectfully to their communication attempts, demonstrating that they are important and have valuable contributions.

Acceptance of uniqueness: We support and celebrate the diverse ways children grow and develop through learning, experiences, play and self-expression. By providing intentional opportunities such as building/construction, dramatic play and role playing, art and creative materials and social-emotional experiences, children have unlimited opportunities to experiment with different forms of expression.

Giving opportunities: Allowing children the safe space to express their emotions through language, play and interactions. We support children by role modeling, labeling, and discussing emotions and supporting them through problem solving and being co-regulators, free from judgement.

Behaviour Management

We promote self-esteem by protecting the emotional and physical well-being of children in our program, ensuring consistency with respect to setting limits for children. We 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., hitting, slapping, spanking or physical restraints).
- Any harsh or degrading measures that would cause humiliation or undermine a child's self-respect.
- Deprivation or withholding a child's basic needs include food, shelter, clothing, or bedding.
- Confinement

Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement:

We regularly evaluate our program to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the children and families we serve. We use a variety of methods to gather feedback, including parent surveys, educator reflections, and observations of children's learning. We use this feedback to make program improvements and ensure that our program continues to reflect best practices in early childhood education.

This program statement serves as a living document and reviewed by program staff and updated annually to reflect our ongoing commitment to providing high-quality care and early learning experiences for all children.

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. A review of the program statement is completed annually or when the document has been modified.

The program supervisor will ensure that all the approaches set out in this program statement are adhered to by monitoring all staff, students, and volunteers. Observations are addressed, recorded, and reflected in the employees' annual/appropriate performance review.

