

First Steps Early Learning and Child Care Centre



Program Statement

About our Centre

First Steps Early Learning and Child Care Centre was established in 1988 and is located in the heart of Almaguin Highlands in the Village of South River. We provide child care to families with toddlers and preschoolers. We are open Monday to Friday from 7:30am to 5:30pm.

The centre is in the DSSAB Hub building at 16 Toronto Ave. The Hub includes an EarlyON Child & Family Centre, offices for Inclusion Support Services, and Home Child Care Program. Our centre boasts a large outdoor learning environment rich with opportunities to explore and engage with nature.

Program Statement

This program statement outlines how First Steps Early Learning and Child Care Centre aligns the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA) and commitment to the families we serve. We embrace the foundations of *How Does Learning Happen?* and focus on the key elements outlined within it. With a thorough understanding of child development, we believe that every child is capable, competent & curious. Our educators provide learning opportunities, with a child centered approach, that foster individual learning styles.

Philosophy

Our philosophy at First Steps Early Learning and Child Care Centre is to provide a safe, secure, healthy and enriching environment where families feel confident their child will thrive while away from them.

Our registered early childhood educators (RECEs) embrace *How Does Learning Happen?* and incorporate components of emergent curriculum.

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

Each child is treated with respect, accepted as an individual and a partner in learning.

Our learning environment is child centered and provides children with opportunities to make choices and decisions.

Interaction with other children expand social and communication skills and educators support conflict resolution.

Guiding Principals

Our program focuses on creating a supportive and stimulating environment using the principals of *How Does Learning Happen?*

Child Centered Learning: We engage the children, recognizing that they are active learners, to take an active role in leading us to their interests. Through observing their strengths, we are able to grasp areas of need which allow us to enhance learning.

Play Based Learning: Play is the ‘work’ of children. We provide an environment that encourages the children to explore, be creative, engage with their peers and develop skills.

Relationships: We strive to create relationships of trust with families & children that are open and honest. These crucial relationships lay the foundation for future connections and influence how children express emotions.

Inclusive Environments: Our program offers a warm & welcoming space where every child feels they are valued, respected and supported. Diversity is celebrated and accommodations are provided to meet unique needs.

How Does Learning Happens?

Our program is rooted in the 4 foundations of How Does Learning Happen? Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement & Expression.

Belonging (HDLH 46 3-h): We create a welcoming atmosphere where families, and children can build genuine relationships with educators and feel a sense of connection. Our consistent routine creates a predictable environment where children are comfortable knowing what to expect. We promote family engagement by sharing regular communication and welcome participation and feedback. We capture opportunities to have individual interactions with children to support their needs. Each child has a labelled space to keep their personal items and are represented throughout the classroom with pictures and artwork.

Well-Being (HDLH 46 3-a, 3-g & 3-c): We maintain a safe, healthy, clean & stimulating environment that supports each child’s development. Our large outdoor, fenced playground is inspected & monitored to ensure safety and allow the children to explore freely. Our menus are developed in accordance with the Canada Food Guide and provide nutritious snacks & meals, made on site daily, giving a variety of options. During mealtimes, educators lead by example, sitting to eat with the children, trying new foods and model healthy habits. We support children in their development of self regulation by labelling emotions and offering tools to help them understand the feelings they’re experiencing. We promote the development of emotional literacy and help them navigate feelings of anxiety. We recognize and respect each child’s individual needs for rest, comfort & self care.

Engagement (46 3-d, 3-e & 3-f): We provide age appropriate, meaningful experiences that build on the children’s interests as observed through daily observations by the educators. Together, we are co-learners in an environment that is rich in open ended materials that allow freedom of choice. We offer a variety of experiences, both indoors & out, that include language & literacy, sensory, arts & crafts and music & movement all while promoting social connections.

We document learning through written observations, pictures, and videos. Our educators use that documentation to reflect and plan for future experiences that meet the children's needs, interests and abilities.

Expression (HDLH 46 3-b): We provide a language rich environment that offers opportunities for children to express themselves creatively and communicate their ideas, thoughts & needs without pressure or judgement. We engage in active listening and respond to all forms of communication, reinforcing that they are valued.

We encourage storytelling, literacy development & pre-reading skills by having a variety of books & writing materials available.

We foster an environment that recognizes that each child is unique in their growth and development. We provide materials, as well as social and dramatic play experiences to enhance emotional awareness and encourage the children to experiment with different forms of expression.

Behaviour Management / Prohibited Practice

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. Our educators 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 manner or offering suggestions of what they can do.

Prohibited Practice:

Young children benefit from an affirming approach that encourages positive interactions with other children and with adults, rather than from a negative or punitive approach to managing unwanted behaviour. The following are prohibited practices with respect to a child receiving child care at a centre operated by the PSDSSAB.

1. corporal punishment of the child,
2. physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a highchair, car seat, stroller, or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself, or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent,
3. locking the exits of the child care centre premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures,
4. use of harsh or degrading measures, threats, or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine his or her self respect, dignity, or self-worth,
5. depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding; or
6. inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Every staff member, placement student and volunteer have a Duty to Report any suspicions of child abuse to the local Children's Aid Society (CAS). All Registered Early Childhood Educators are bound to comply with the College of ECE's Code of Ethics and Professional Standards.

This document may be found at <https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Public/professionalstandards>

Ongoing Evaluation & 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.

