

Program Statement

Purpose

Bay Park Children's Centre Program Statement reflects the philosophy of Early Childhood Education and is in line with the Ministry of Education's pedagogy for the Early Years and the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Bay Park Children's Centre follows the Ministry of Education's play-based philosophy and is organized around the four foundations for learning from the document, *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years 2014 (HDLH)*, to guide our programming.

Policy

At Bay Park Children's Centre we are committed to putting into practice our belief that education in the early years is a foundation for future success. Play is essential to learning because it fosters children's natural curiosity and enthusiasm. We believe that every child at our centre is curious, capable, and full of potential. They will be given the opportunity to develop their foundation in a warm and supportive environment.

Our philosophy and program statement will be re-evaluated regularly to reflect changes within the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and principles of early childhood education. The Program Statement will be reviewed by staff prior to employment with the centre and as any changes occur. Likewise, our philosophy and program statement will be reviewed by students and volunteers prior to their placements with the centre and as any changes occur. The Centre will also keep parents informed of any changes and welcomes comments and suggestions.

Procedure

Health & Nutrition

Bay Park Children's Centre's goal is to provide safe and healthy learning environment. Staff work diligently to maintain a hygienic environment that follows Public Health guidelines for hand washing, diapering, and toileting. Our educators believe that mealtimes are important in supporting the health and well-being of our children. Bay Park Children's Centre provides two snacks and a hot lunch daily. Our educators sit with the children during snack and mealtimes to model eating a variety of foods and to engage in social interactions. The Centre has a four-week rotating menu that is planned according to the Canada Food Guide and all food is cooked with consideration of maintaining its full nutritional value. The snacks and meals are prepared on-site by our experienced cook. Vegetable purees are added on occasion to supplement the nutritional value of a meal. The children are encouraged to taste a variety of foods, but no child is ever forced to eat foods they do not wish to. All parts of the meal make up a child's nutritional requirements therefore no food will be withheld. When necessary, menu adjustments are provided to accommodate allergies and/or family preferences.

Safety

Safety is a priority at Bay Park Children's Centre. Upon arrival, children are signed into their classroom using the designated attendance binder. Staff perform regular head counts of the children to ensure everyone is present. Staff position themselves for maximum view of the learning environment to ensure they can properly supervise all the children in their care. Monthly fire drills are practiced to ensure all staff and children understand the safety protocols put in place.

Well-being

While not all children need a mid-day nap, we believe that young children benefit from periods of quiet relaxation to balance their active play. Therefore, opportunities for rest and quiet play are incorporated into the day during the two-hour rest-time after lunch for our preschool and toddler children, and throughout the day as required for our infant program.

Positive and Responsive Relationships

Our educators know that it is important to form positive and trusting relationships with the children in an atmosphere of love and security. These positive relationships contribute to the children's over-all sense of well-being, belonging, value and mental health. Our educators strive to develop authentic relationships from the first day a child enters our centre. We hold an annual spring open house & BBQ in our play yard with current and new families, staff, and Board Members. This evening event provides a relaxed environment where our families can connect with one another, their child's educators and meet members of the Board of Directors. Our educators view preparing for outdoor play as an opportunity for social interactions and for developing self-help skills, and independence by teaching dressing skills in a fun manner (IE: the "day care flip").

Supporting Self-Regulation

In considering the individual needs of the children, children needing quiet time or space to cope with their emotions are invited to use quiet areas of the classroom. Staff connect with parents about calming techniques used at home for quiet or rest and make every effort to mirror those methods at the centre. Our educator's model best practices and are encouraged to be aware of their own personal emotions and need to self-regulate. They are encouraged to respect each child and to be clear and consistent in their expectations. Our educators strive to set realistic limits based on clear and consistent explanations that are understandable from the child's perspective. When challenging behaviours happen our educators seek to determine the root of the situation and work with the children to resolve the matter in a positive manner. This not only helps the children to feel supported and listened to, but we believe this approach helps the children to take responsibility for their own actions, supports self-regulation, and respects the rights of all involved. To preserve the integrity and self-confidence of the child, our educators focus on correcting the behaviours rather than the child. They model desired behaviours, offer positive verbal reminders, re-direct inappropriate behaviours and reinforce positive behaviours. They do so with both words and gestures, while ignoring inappropriate behaviours where possible.

Foster Exploration

We believe that exploration helps children better understand the world. This experience provides the opportunity to experience new things and learn about the impact they have on their environment. Indoor and outdoor gardening activities give children the opportunity to participate in active learning about where food comes from. Our educators understand the relationship between outdoor play and its benefits to cognitive & physical development and risk-taking. Within a safe play yard environment, children take part in age-appropriate risk-taking to allow them to develop a sense of boundaries and safe or unsafe play. Our educators strive to design outdoor play environments that support multiple developmental domains and work towards bringing the classroom outside by providing various outdoor activities. Our educators also provide opportunities to help the children begin to understand they are part of a bigger community through occasional walks around our neighbourhood.

Child Initiated and Adult Supported

We believe that through child-initiated and adult-supported experiences children will develop new skills while building their relationships with peers and educators. Staff take the time to get down on the children's level to play, grow, engage, and support positive and responsive interactions. Our staff listen, observe, document, reflect and then use that information to engage the children in meaningful experiences. These experiences invite investigation, exploration, and imagination. We believe children are capable and competent and therefore encourage them to be independent while asking for help when necessary. Our toddlers and preschoolers are encouraged to build their independent skills in routines such as dressing, toileting, washing, eating, and tidying up. These developmental skills help foster a sense of independence, self-worth, accomplishment and belonging.

Positive and Inclusive Learning Environments

We understand that children are precious and unique individuals. We value the diversity of each child and their family, regardless of their background, behaviours, or life situations. We strive to maintain an inclusive attitude as we create positive environments and experiences. We support each child in their development in a way that is inclusive of all children, including children with individualized plans.

Types of Play

Our staff are responsible for introducing new concepts and skills to help broaden the children's knowledge. We use hands-on learning to engage the whole child. Our educators also provide opportunities for loose parts play, exploration, and inquiry. Children explore the arts through various activities including but not limited to: light play, mirror play, musical expression and various forms of art mediums. Our educators design their daily routines to include long periods of play with limited interruptions or transitions to support engagement, calmness, and well-being.

Communication with Families

At Bay Park Children's Centre we understand that communication is key in providing quality care. Staff work to foster engagement with our parents about the program and their children. Our staff are encouraged to learn what is important to our families. Included in the enrolment package are forms asking about family traditions, special vacations and areas of interest that could be shared with the centre. Photos of family members are in the classrooms to help the children feel connected to their families throughout the day. Staff send pictures and a daily report to parents using the Procure program to help them connect with their child's day. The Procure program also offers the opportunity for communication between staff and families. Yearly, families are asked to provide feedback through our Parent Satisfaction Survey. We value the feedback and consider all suggestions seriously when looking for areas of improvement. Our parents are also kept informed of any relevant seminars, workshops or meetings related to child development, family and spiritual life topics made available through the centre and/or the church. If parents have any concerns about their child's progress, they are encouraged to arrange a meeting with their child's educator at a time when they can devote their entire attention. The Director's door is always open!

Community Partners

Our centre works with community partners in a team approach. Through observations, information sharing, and adapting program environments, we strive to provide the best support to meet the needs of the individual child(ren) and by sharing professional knowledge and resources.

Professional Learning

We believe all Early Childhood Educators need to be reflective practitioners, learning about children through listening, observing, documenting, and discussion. Our educators use these forms of information to provide meaningful programming. Educators are challenged to review, evaluate, and discover the impact of their planning and strategies on the learning environment. Staff are encouraged to explore new ideas and to continue their professional development in field-related areas through workshops, seminars, courses in person or online.

Documentation

Through observing, recording, and reflecting individual interests, staff provide programming that furthers each child's learning experience. Bay Park Children's Centre uses the web-based program, "Procure" to assist in documenting the children's learning journeys and to increase parent engagement with our centre. Our staff recognize that pedagogical documentation is a way for them to understand how children think, learn, and make meaning of the world around them. Our educators write their observations on documentation forms posted in the classrooms. Staff use these observations to enhance the learning environment by expanding and building on areas of interest shown by the children.

Christian Principles

Bay Park Children's Centre's is also founded on Christian principles and the significant value it places on human life. We believe that we are a result of God's handiwork. We are entrusted to care for His littlest creations through love and teaching them about His world. Our goal is for each child to reach the full potential that He has planned for them. It is the centre's belief that every child is a unique gift from God. Our educators are encouraged to nurture the whole child physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. The children are provided spiritual development through blended programming that reinforces such things as Santa and baby Jesus, giving thanks for the natural beauty and wonder of creation around us; unconditional love and respect for one another; the gift of family, friends, and the larger diverse world. These values are reinforced weekly through Bible Story Time which consists of felt stories and songs from October thru May.