



PROGRAM STATEMENT

Adopted January 2017

It is our privilege to teach your child at Polka Dot Preschool. The goal of our character-building readiness program is to help each child at our school to believe that he/she is special through a loving and caring environment. We provide a positive learning environment in which your child can reach his/her optimum level of development in all areas: cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically. In light of this tremendous goal, we have several key objectives for our children at Polka Dot Preschool.

We believe that children, families and staff are capable, competent, curious and rich in potential. We are committed to collaborating with children, their families and with each other as educators to create high quality Early Learning and Care Environments that take a strength based approach to learning and development in which children, parents and educators are co-learners.

HOW DOES LEARNING HAPPEN? Is the foundation of our program

Using the common framework articulated in How Does Learning Happen? Our centre will support the children to achieve the following **Goals** and will meet the **Expectations** for programs building on our **four (4) foundations** for healthy growth and development:

| Foundations | Goals for Children | Expectations for Program |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Belonging | Every child has a sense of belonging when he/she is connected to others and contributes to his/her world | Cultivate respectful relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults and the world around them. |
| Well-Being | Every child is developing a sense of self and health and well-being | Nurture children's healthy development and support their growing sense of self. |
| Engagement | Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with her/his senses, bodies and mind | Provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningfully exploration and learning. |
| Expression | Every child is a capable communicator who is able to express himself/herself in many ways | Foster communication and expression in all forms. |

Our Overarching Strategies

Our Centre has worked to incorporate and embed the Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) principles, along with the Provincial Pedagogy for Early Learning, to strengthen the quality of our programs and ensure high-quality experiences that promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children.

Working collaboratively, we will plan for and create positive Early Learning Environments that:

1) Promote the health, safety and well-being of young children, families and educators.

You will see:

- Photographs and names of all the staff posted;
- Well organized environments, with lots of materials that are easily accessible to the children – the children don't have to ask for everything that they need;
- A process to sign your child in and out of the program, to ensure they are safely supervised;
- Healthy menus, that follow Canada's Food Guide;
- Children and staff washing their hands frequently throughout the day to promote good hygiene and to reduce the spread of illness;
- Breakfast is served to the children who arrive early and water is always available to the children throughout the day;
- At meal times, educators sit and eat with the children and there are lots of conversations;
- Children feed themselves and are encouraged but never forced to try new foods;
- Lots of opportunity for gross motor play; children are encouraged to use their entire bodies to explore the world;
- Positive language that emphasizes accomplishment and effort;
- The Centre is kept clean throughout the day, and is professionally cleaned on a nightly basis;
- All visitors are required to ring the door bell. The entry doors are kept closed and can only be accessed by parents and staff using the entry code;
- In the Preschool rooms and Kindergarten rooms, there are computers and the staff assist children to look up information on the Internet to expand or enhance their play and learning; and
- Educators follow the Health and Safety Guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education and York Region Public Health.

Healthy Food and Active Play Makes A Difference

Additionally, opportunities for rest and a balance between active and more reflective play are strategies that will be implemented to support positive interactions and facilitate healthy development.

2) Supportive positive and responsive interactions between educators, children and families.

You will see:

- During the process to enrol your child at our Centre, the Director or Designate will provide you with a tour of the facility, introduce you and your child to the Educators, and compile information about your child's specific needs, likes and dislikes, and what comforts your child. This will allow staff to begin to build an understanding of your child's individual needs;
- Educators who greet and welcome you and your child upon arrival at the program;
- Educators using calm voices and at the child's level for face to face interactions; and
- Parents and educators talking together, sharing information and knowledge about each child.

Strategies to Support and Strengthen Positive Interactions

Positive Interactions are encouraged and supported by the development of enriched environments where all children belong and where there are a range of interesting, intriguing and developmentally appropriate activity options to engage the children. Educators are reflective practitioners whose knowledge and understanding of the individual child and child development supports positive behaviours on the part of children, educators and families. The focus on the positive is a key component of our affirming approach.

Questions educators ask themselves:

- How do I engage with children in a way that builds on their strengths as opposed to identifying what they are doing "wrong"?
- Am I learning too? How do I respond when a child asks me something I don't know? Do I redirect the child to something else or do I respond: "Let's find out together!"
- Am I moving away from viewing play as just something children do and moving towards viewing play as intentional and inquiry based; a way for children to express themselves in multiple ways?

- Am I having fun? Is at least a part of each day filled with a shared sense of joy that is the wonder of new learning for me and the children with whom I engage? What are the clues that demonstrate that I am engaged and interested in what I am doing?

Supporting Children to Manage their Behaviour

Children benefit socially, emotionally and physically from our positive approach. Educators focus on helping the children understand their feelings and emotions and provide support to help children regulate their behaviour.

The following are unacceptable behaviour management strategies and are not permitted at any time under any circumstances.

- 1) Corporal punishment.
- 2) Deliberate harsh or degrading measures to be used on a child that would humiliate a child or undermine a child's self-respect.
- 3) Deprivation of a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding.
- 4) Any person to lock or permit to be locked for the purpose of confining a child, by using the exits of the day nursery.
- 5) Any person to use a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child who has been withdrawn from the other children.
- 6) Any child to be left unattended.
- 7) Use of any abusive language, yelling or screaming.
- 8) Any use of physical restraint such as confining a child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purpose or in lieu of supervision.
- 9) Inflicting bodily harm and forcing a child to eat or drink against their will. Exceptions to this will only be made in situations that have been deemed medically necessary and the child will be required to have a doctor's letter on file indicating the specifics of such direction.

3) Encourage and enable children to interact and communicate in a myriad of ways with each other, with educators and with their communities.

You will see:

- Many different ways for children to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings including:
 - Painting, drawing, modelling with clay, play dough and other art and creative/sensory materials;
 - Telling or writing stories;
 - Singing and dancing;

- Talking with educators;
- Talking with other children ;
- Building with blocks and other building materials;
- Conducting experiments; and
- Solving problems;
- Planned excursions outside of the Centre, to promote children's connection to their local community.

4) Foster exploration and inquiry that is play based. Evidence for diverse fields of study tells us that when children are playing, they are learning.

You will see:

- Children making sense of the world around them through play.
- Play that is supported by caring adults in environments with materials, space and time that encourage complex thinking and aid children to gain essential skills. These skills include: creative problem-solving, learning to get along with others, coping with challenges, overcoming obstacles, and learning to focus their attention. These are foundational activities that promote the development of literacy, numeracy and other important life skills.
- For children who show interest in numbers, letters, reading and other direct learning activities, the teachers will also provide opportunities for these children.

Supporting Healthy Development and Learning

At Polka Dot Preschool each child's specific strengths, needs and developmental goals are identified. Educators set goals through individual attention, inquiry play-base activities, and positive learning environments in which each child's learning and development is support. Educators focus on children's social, emotional, physical, creative and cognitive development in a holistic way. This approach will be strengthened by:

- 1) Preparing the environment to foster learning and development;
- 2) Building on the children's ideas, questions and theories as observed in play;
- 3) A collaborative approach that incorporates discussion amongst team members about how to support deeper exploration; and
- 4) Inviting and engaging others in the continuing process of program development including parents, the children themselves and other community partners, including but not limited to educators within the school system.

Children learn through exploration, play and inquiry with the educators as co-learners. Educators have thoughtful exchanges with children, which encourages them to interact and communicate in a positive way, and promotes their ability to self-regulate. We use children's portfolios, learning stories, pictures and other pedagogical documentation of children's activities on an on-going basis to study, interpret, make visible, and help inform children's learning and development, as well as the overall program.

5) Provide both child initiated and adult supported experiences to foster development.

You will see:

- Weekly Program Plans posted with a variety of educator planned activities, that will be added to throughout the week as children expand on the activities or move forward in new directions;
- The number of transitions during the day are limited; children do not spend a lot of time lining up or waiting for activities to take place; and
- Times when the child takes the lead in planning the activity and times when the educator builds on observation to develop and implement activities that support each child to stretch his/her skills and abilities.

6) Provide many opportunities for a range of experiences that support each child's learning and development.

You will see:

- Children actively engaged in activities, usually in small groups;
- Children and staff are smiling, laughing and having fun; playing and learning together;
- Educators observing and making documentation about children to build on the children's experiences;
- Educators discussing the documentation with the children; and
- A focus on learning through play with educators encouraging and supporting questions, answers and problem solving on the part of the children.

7) Incorporate a range of different experience modalities including indoor and outdoor play, active play, quiet play, rest and quiet time considering the individual needs of children.

You will see:

- Well stocked toy shelves and creative materials available to the children;
- Quiet comfortable spaces for reading or quiet individual activities or rest;
- Children engaged in a range of different activities throughout the day;
- Children taking the lead; actively shaping their play;
- Educators listen and learn from the children as much as the children listen and learn from the educators;

- Educators encouraging children to explore nature and their natural environments; and
- Quiet activities provided for children who do not require a nap during rest times.

8) Foster engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.

You will see:

- Educators seek out opportunities to talk with parents without ignoring the needs of the children;
- For Toddlers and Preschool Programs, daily information sheets will be completed by the Educators for parents;
- Educators assessing each child's development with the results being shared with parents;
- Opportunities, both planned and informal for parents and educators to share ideas about how best to support each child;
- Portfolios for each child which are accessible to parents; which is documented through the SeeSaw Program.
- Accident/Incident Reports completed if your child has an accident to provide you with information as required.

Parents as Partners

Educators foster engagement and ongoing communications with families regarding the program and their children. We strive to build positive and responsive relationships with children and their families. We recognize and value each family for their unique strengths, perspectives and contributions to our program. Families are encouraged to participate in our program; we are partners in supporting the development of healthy, happy, capable and competent children.

A strong respectful and equitable relationship with parents is key to our ability to fully engage as co-learners with the children and with their families. To this end, we seek out ways to engage parents in a way that meets their needs and builds on strengths while respecting the challenges that face young families including long commutes, time pressures and the business inherent in raising a family. Strategies include but are not limited to:

- An "open door" policy that welcomes parents to drop off and pick up at the times that work best for their family within the hours that the Centre is open and allows them to drop in to observe whenever convenient for the parent;
- Informal discussions on a daily basis;

- Posted documentation of activities, interactions and engagement;
- Parent/educator interviews;
- Sharing resources and materials about community supports and activities;
- Inviting parent participation in the development of curriculum;
- Inviting and encouraging parents to participate directly in the day to day activities of the Centre;
- Social and open house activities;

Key ideas and messages we share with parents:

- Our program is **play and inquiry based** because research tells us that this is the way children learn best. A play based program provides the kids of opportunities that children need to be fully **engaged** and to learn how to **express** themselves many different ways. We will be sharing our learning with and about your children in many different ways;
- What do you think is important that I know about your child, to support his/her **well-being**?
- These are our goals for your child and this is what we will be doing with your child to support the achievement of these goals:
 - 1) To help each child experience cognitive growth and educational stimulation with a positive attitude. This can be accomplished through experimentation, participating in language activities, sensory awareness and many other creative and educational activities.
 - 2) To help each child to become socially well adjusted by building positive relationships with the family, peers and adults. By being in a group situation, he/she will learn to respect others, co-operate and participate with others, and to share and care for the belongings of others.
 - 3) To help each child to become emotionally sound by building in him/her a positive, healthy self esteem and by developing a confidence in him/herself and others because of experiencing success. We encourage the children to build empathy for the feelings and emotions of others.
 - 4) To help each child to acquire a physical well being by developing large and fine muscle control and co-ordination. We establish desirable health habits, positive attitudes toward bodily functions, exercise, their bodies and nutrition; and

- How can we support your **engagement** with our program so that you feel that you **belong**? What works for you, your schedule and your family?

9) Actively engage with community partners and provide opportunities for the children and families, to develop close connections with a range of community supports.

You will see:

- Parents are welcomed at any time and are encouraged to drop in when and if they have time to do so;
- Planned excursions to community services and programs such as the local library, grocery stores and other neighbourhood locations; and
- Use of community partners as a resource and support to families, children and staff.

10) Strengthen the capacity of Educators to collaborate effectively with children, families and their colleagues through the provision of ongoing opportunities for continuous professional learning.

You will see:

- Staff encouraged and supported to attend professional development;
- Registered Early Childhood Educators are required by their membership in the College of Early Childhood Educators to commit to their own ongoing professional learning;
- New ideas and strategies to support children's development introduced throughout the program; and
- Materials and research shared with parents.

Continuous Professional Learning for Educators

Our Early Learning and Child Care Centres are environments that support Educators, and others who interact with children, to continually self-reflect, have discussion, foster ongoing collaboration, and engage in continuous professional learning, in order to provide the best possible learning environment for children. Staff are provided with many mandatory Health and Safety related training sessions, such as Standard First Aid and Infant/Child CPR, Occupational Health and Safety Training, OADA. In addition,

- Staff are encouraged to participate in workshops and other professional learning opportunities each year;
- Staff have scheduled planning time every day;

- Staff meet together to share ideas and information and to develop programs;
- Staff are encouraged and supported to participate on community networks and committees; and
- RECEs are encouraged to participate in the College of Early Childhood Educators Continuous Professional Learning Program

11) Use many language to document and review the experiences of the children and the educators in order to:

- Provide an ongoing record of development;
- Provide tools to enable educators to reflect on the impact of their activities and strategies; and
- Provide a visual and oral record that enables parents to review and explore the developmental path of their child.

You will see:

- Documentation posted on the walls that tells and shows you what the children are doing;
- Different methods of recording observations about what the children are accomplishing.

A Commitment to Continuous Improvement

All new staff, students and volunteers are required to review the Program Statement prior to interaction with children in our care, and at time the Program Statement is updated. All staff are required to review the Program Statement on an annual basis. This will be accomplished at a yearend staff meeting which provides an opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges of the past year and to set goals for the upcoming year.