

PROGRAM STATEMENT DAY CARE PROGRAMS

Upper Canada Child Care is committed to providing quality programs that are consistent with Ministry of Education policies and pedagogy, as outlined in the following documents:

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy in the Early Years*
- *Early Learning for Every Child Today*
- *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children*

Upper Canada views all children as competent, curious individuals who are rich in potential and capable of complex thinking. Each child is a unique person with his/her own interests, abilities, and dispositions, and deserves to feel accepted, understood, supported, and respected within our programs.

Research tells us that children learn in relationship with their environment and with others, through interactions with the people around them, and through actively exploring the world with their bodies, minds, and senses. Children learn best when they are fully involved in experiences that are meaningful to them, support their own interests, and allow them to make connections between what they already know and what they are experiencing. We know children learn when they are able to effectively regulate their energy and emotions, and are willing to take risks and face challenges.

Most importantly, we know that children learn through play whether it is lively and exuberant, or quiet and absorbing. Research is finding more and more of a connection between children's play that is freely chosen, joyful, active, and guided by their enthusiasm (rather than by outside goals) and the learning and social development that helps them succeed in life.

CURRICULUM GOALS AND APPROACHES:

1. Promote the Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-Being of the Children

In order for children to be successful, their basic physiological needs must be met. Practices that maintain safe, clean environments help to ensure the basic provision of care exists. Good nutrition, time spent outdoors, and a balance between active play, quiet play, and rest all promote physical, emotional, and social well-being which support children's learning, and help them to establish healthy habits that last into adulthood.

What does this look like in practice?

- Healthy menus that incorporate a wide variety of fresh produce, whole grains, legumes, and lean meats, while limiting processed items and excess refined sugar
- Policies and procedures that promote sanitary environments and limit the spread of communicable illness

- Policies and procedures that ensure effective supervision, and safe play environments
- Policies and procedures that ensure emergency preparedness
- Educator certification in Standard First Aid and CPR
- A strong commitment to outdoor play and building connections with the natural world
- Where possible, providing fresh air, natural lighting, and a reduction of toxic chemicals, loud noise, and clutter to create healthy environments that contribute to a sense of physical and emotional calm

2.
Support Positive and Responsive Interactions Among the Children, Parents, Child Care Providers, and Staff

Emotional well-being is nurtured in an environment where educators interact in warm, responsive, and meaningful ways, and communicate in a manner that ensures children, families, and colleagues feel understood, valued, and respected. When positive interactions and responsive communication exist, authentic relationships are built, and a sense of belonging, trust and comfort are fostered.

What does this look like in practice?

- We consistently greet children and families by name, and seek to build relationships that prioritize the best interests of each child.
- We supportively respond to the ideas, concerns and needs of children, families, and colleagues
- We establish inclusive environments, and interact with children in culturally, linguistically and developmentally sensitive ways

3.
Encourage the Children to Interact and Communicate in a Positive Way and Support Their Ability to Self-Regulate

Upper Canada is committed to supporting each child’s developing capacity for self-regulation and positive interactions, in a safe and nurturing environment. By focusing on our ability to live effectively with others and value both one’s own rights and attributes, and the rights and attributes of others, we support the developing understanding of our classroom as a community, our responsibilities to one another, and the value of collaboration.

What does this look like in practice?

- We help children to develop positive connections with peers by supporting their efforts to join and sustain play, by focusing attention on positive interactions with others, and by encouraging children to value one another’s individuality

- We support children in their efforts to respond to challenges and conflict by encouraging each individual to take an active role in problem solving and identifying alternative solutions
- We respond sensitively to emotions, and encourage children to identify and label feelings. Educators recognize that feelings of distress, fear and discomfort may take time to resolve, and they allow children the time and support required to recover from difficult feelings
- We encourage children to identify what sorts of activities and experiences help them to remain calm and focused, and what type of activities they need to limit to maintain self-regulation
- We routinely provide small group experiences and transitions that minimize distractions, and allow time and space for high quality interactions
- Our educators receive on-going mentoring and regular monitoring to support their ability to develop and implement positive child guidance strategies

**4.
Foster the Children’s Exploration, Play, and Inquiry**

Children are most likely to become fully engaged in play that develops from their natural curiosity and allows them to actively explore their world. Genuine involvement and engagement is fostered when educators value children’s imaginations, ideas and interests, and follow the children’s lead in their adventures. When children are engaged, they develop important skills for lifelong learning, including the ability to plan, problem solve, and develop theories about the world around them.

What does this look like in practice?

- We actively observe play and interactions to identify what the children are interested in, and what they know and understand about their world, and plan experiences and resources to build upon these
- Our educators join in children’s play, while being careful not to direct the course of activity; they are purposefully curious about new experiences, and participate as a co-investigator, co-learner and co-planner, by asking questions such as:
 - What do you see?
 - What do you think?
 - What do you wonder?
 - How do you think we could find out?
- We offer the opportunity for children to meet challenges and take appropriate risks that extend the boundaries of their learning

**5.
Provide for Child-Initiated and Adult-Supported Experiences**

Upper Canada educators identify that in order to create an effective learning environment, there must be a balance between following the children’s leads and interests, and planning and implementing experiences that will support children’s skill development and a growing understanding of their world.



What does this look like in practice?

- We design classroom environments and schedules that respond to the children's curiosities and needs, and allow children the choice to participate based on their own interests and pursuits
- We plan and provide for activities and experiences which are intended to deepen understanding, develop skills and foster an increasing awareness of key concepts, including literacy and numeracy development.
- We invite and encourage children and families to actively participate in classroom planning

**6.
Plan for, and Create, Positive Learning Environments and Experiences in Which
Each Child's Learning and Development Will Be Supported**

By identifying the role of "The Environment as the Third Teacher", Upper Canada programs focus attention on creating settings that offer opportunities for active, creative, and meaningful exploration, and that reflect a sense of place and belonging for the children, families, and staff.

What does this look like in practice?

- Room exists for active and quiet play, for building friendships and spending time alone
- Spaces are designed to create a "home-like" feel, and include soft furnishings, natural lighting, family photos and "real-life" play materials
- Classrooms provide many opportunities for children to discover, imagine and create; materials are selected for their ability to spark curiosity, invite investigation and provide challenges to extend learning. Classroom toys and equipment, along with loose parts, are open ended to encourage self-directed use and foster complex play
- Plants, pets and natural elements are incorporated for their ability to engage senses, inspire inquiry and discovery, and connect us to the natural world
- Classroom displays focus on the documentation of children's experiences, expressions and accomplishments
- Daily routines, such as mealtimes, washroom and dressing for outdoors, are viewed as opportunities for learning and building relationships. Children are provided the time and support needed to accomplish tasks independently, and are invited to participate in completion of regular classroom chores



7.
Incorporate Indoor and Outdoor Play (as Well as Active Play, Rest, and Quiet Time) Into the Day, and Give Consideration to the Individual Needs of the Children Receiving Care

Children's requirements for active play, quiet time, and rest will vary throughout the day, and from child to child. Upper Canada educators create flexible and unhurried schedules that provide a level of predictable routine, while responding to individual needs.

What does this look like in practice?

- When possible, our classes are separated into small groups to reduce waiting time through transitions, and accommodate individual interests by encouraging children to choose their level and area of participation
- We minimize transitions to allow for large blocks of time for uninterrupted play
- We are responsive to individual needs for sleep and rest. Rest time provides opportunity for sleep, relaxation, and quiet play
- We understand the importance of outdoor time, not only as an opportunity for active play, but also as an opportunity to explore, create, and investigate. Educators focus on enhancing outdoor areas through the incorporation of natural elements, loose parts, and open ended materials, and provide resources for creative art experiences, role play, and scientific exploration
- We look for opportunities to explore nature "outside of the fence", by accessing local community green spaces (such as fields, ponds and forests) and by engaging in field trips to outdoor locations (such as conservation areas, parks and local farms)
- We do not allow inclement weather to prevent us from providing opportunity for outdoor play. As long as weather conditions are safe for children to play outside, groups will participate in outdoor play

8.
Foster the Engagement of, and Ongoing Communication With, Parents Regarding the Program and Their Children

Ongoing, respectful communication between parents and staff is essential, and acts as the cornerstone of partnership. Communication deepens our understanding of one another's expectations and attitudes, and allows us to build on the strength of collective knowledge by respecting the importance of family ties and traditions, we believe that we must work in partnership with families to strengthen the bond between home and school to promote the overall success of each child's experience.

What does this look like in practice?

- We identify that families know their children best, and are their own child's first and most influential teachers



- We recognize that our children grow up in families with diverse experiences and cultural perspectives, and understand that all families have their own individual strengths and potential
- We communicate and share ideas and information in many ways, including:
 - daily interactions
 - scheduled interviews
 - program documentation
 - centre newsletters and bulletins
 - parent satisfaction surveys
- We invite parents to be involved in ways that reflect their interests and talents, to a degree that suits their personal level of comfort. Opportunities for participation can include:
 - classroom visits
 - centre functions and cultural celebrations
 - volunteering on field trips and outings
 - sharing interests, skills and hobbies
 - parent workshops and meetings

9.
Involve Local Community Partners and Allow Those Partners to Support the Children, Their Families, and Staff

Upper Canada Child Care programs identify the importance of supporting children and families in the context with their environments, and encourage a sense of belonging and connectedness with their local communities.

What does this look like in practice?

- Upper Canada programs work closely with our local school communities to establish positive, collaborative relationships. Partnerships with the school community can include:
 - reciprocal involvement in special events such as assemblies, barbeques, concerts etc.
 - sharing of resources
 - ongoing communication through daily interactions, meetings, and conferences
 - combined professional learning opportunities for educators
- Our programs actively plan for and encourage opportunities for community engagement through experiences such as:
 - excursions to local businesses
 - classroom visits from community helpers
 - fundraising efforts to support individuals in need, whether they be in our immediate, national, or global community
- When children require extra support, we work with community partners to access resources and strategies that help remove barriers preventing children from active participation in our programs. Community agencies that we partner with include, but are not limited to:
 - Speech and Language
 - Early Intervention Services
 - Community Living



10.
Support Staff or Others Who Interact With the Children at a Child Care Centre in Relation to Continuous Professional Learning

Upper Canada Child Care educators are knowledgeable, caring, reflective, and resourceful professionals who work together to continually develop their understanding of the children and families they work with.

What does this look like in practice?

- We offer regular training sessions, workshop opportunities, international learning excursions and an annual agency conference
- Our educators participate in regular team meetings, staff meetings, regional networking sessions, and special-interest committees.
- We engage in proven leadership practices which:
 - identify and articulate a vision that ensures shared understandings and goals
 - promote effective communication
 - monitor and assess practice
 - practice distributive leadership
- We promote the daily practice of reflection and collaboration by encouraging our staff to make a commitment to ongoing contemplation, dialogue, exploration, and experimentation within their classrooms

11.
Pedagogical Documentation as a Guide for Program Development

Documentation is a powerful reflective tool for educators to understand the children more deeply, and to help them make decisions for next steps in their curriculum. By capturing and displaying our children's discoveries and forms of expression, teachers demonstrate that each child is listened to, and that their work is important. Documentation helps make learning visible, and provokes meaningful dialogue between parents, educators, and children.

What does this look like in practice?

- Educators continually observe children at play to learn how each child makes meaning through his or her experience of the world around them. Our educators consider the significance of their observations, and plan activities and environments to enhance learning and interests
- We work together to create, display, reflect on and revisit documentation
- Educators use observations and collected documentation to examine their own questions about teaching and learning, and to monitor and assess on-going curriculum implementation



- We use a variety of formats to support the process of pedagogical documentation, which can include:
 - child and educator portfolios
 - learning stories
 - documentation panels
 - photos and observational notes
 - work samples and artifacts

- In order to evaluate the impact of strategies outlined in Upper Canada's *Program Statement* on children and families within our centres, supervisors and educators will engage in ongoing assessment and reflection of their programs. Regular review will include, but is not limited to:
 - parent feedback received through annual surveys, suggestion boxes, etc.
 - opportunities for parents and educators to meet to review child and classroom portfolios
 - regular meetings between supervisors and educators, in conjunction with monitoring reviews, to revisit classroom portfolios and pedagogical documentation

