PROGRAM STATEMENT

A smile on each child's face... every day.

Upper Canada Child Care (UCCC) is committed to providing quality programs that are guided by our organizational values of **support, trust, safety, respect and professionalism,** and 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**
- **Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children**
- **Think, Feel, Act: Empowering Children in the Middle Years**

UCCC views all children as competent, curious individuals who are rich in potential and capable of complex thinking. Each child is a unique person with their own interests, abilities, and dispositions, and deserves to feel accepted, understood, supported, and respected within our programs. We believe that we set the stage for our children's success when we foster the foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression in 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

The following curriculum goals align with the Ministry of Education's policy statement on programming and policy (O.Reg. 137/15, ss 46 1-4). The approaches outlined are applied within all Upper Canada Child Care programs however, implementation varies according to the ages and stages of children in each classroom, and according to the unique needs of each classroom community.

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

In order for children to be successful, their basic needs must be met and practices that maintain safe, clean environments, ensure this basic provision of care. Additionally, good nutrition, time spent outdoors, and a balance between active play, quiet play, and rest promote physical and emotional 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?

- Providing healthy menus based on Canada's Guide to Healthy Eating, and modelling healthy attitudes toward food. Children are encouraged to pay attention and respond to their individual hunger cues, and to serve themselves through open snacks and family style lunch routines.

- Educators follow policies and procedures that:
  - promote sanitary environments and limit the spread of communicable illness;
  - promote effective, developmentally appropriate supervision and safe play environments; and
  - promote preparedness for emergency situations.

- Our organization demonstrates strong commitment to active outdoor play, and to building connections with the natural world.

- Where possible, we provide 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.

- Educators foster emotional resilience by cultivating a "meaning mindset" through encouraging healthy thinking, feel-good activities and an attitude of gratitude.

Support Positive and Responsive Interactions Among Children, Parents, and Child Care Providers

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. Positive interactions and responsive communication build authentic relationships fostering a sense of belonging, trust and comfort.

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 foster empathy by modelling empathetic behavior, encouraging a classroom culture of care, respect and acceptance.
- We establish inclusive, bias-free environments, and interact with children in culturally and developmentally sensitive ways.
- We focus on showing affection and building connections with children, rather than directing and correcting children's behaviours.

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

We are 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 the rights and attributes of ourselves and 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 relationships with peers by supporting their efforts to join and sustain play, by focusing attention on positive interactions, and by encouraging children to value each other'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 recognize and understand the difference between misbehaviour and stress behaviour, and work to address factors within our influence that may be impacting a child's stress load.
- We encourage children to identify what sorts of activities and experiences help them to remain calm and focused, and which ones lead to difficulties maintaining self-regulation.
- We routinely provide small group experiences and transitions that allow time and space for high quality interactions.

Foster Children's Exploration, Play, and Inquiry

Children become fully engaged in play that develops from their natural curiosity and allows them to explore their world. Engagement is fostered when educators value children's imaginations, ideas, and interests. 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 observe play and interactions to identify what the children are interested in, and what they know and understand about their world, and we plan experiences and provide resources to build upon these experiences.
- Our educators join in children's play, and participate as a co-investigator, co-learner and co-planner. Educators are careful not to direct the course of play, but demonstrate curiosity 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 challenge themselves and take appropriate risks that extend the boundaries of their learning.

Provide for Child-Initiated and Adult-Supported Experiences

Our 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 flexible schedules that respond to the children's curiosities and needs, and allow children the choice to participate based on their own interests.

- Based on our observations of children's interests and abilities, we plan and provide for activities and experiences that are open-ended, child-directed and designed to build skills, foster literacy development and support an increased understanding of STEM concepts.

- We encourage children to take an active role in planning and implementing the day-to-day activities of the group, and respond to the spontaneous cues that emerge by facilitating further engagement in areas of interest

Plan and Create Positive Learning Environments and Experiences to Support Each Child's Learning and Development

By identifying the role of "The Environment as the Third Teacher", we create settings that reflect a sense of place and belonging for the children, families, and educators, and that offer opportunities for active, creative, and meaningful exploration. Recognizing that all children have varying abilities and strengths, we commit to providing supports that help foster each child's success within our program.

What does this look like in practice?

- Providing spaces for active and quiet play, for building friendships, and spending time alone.
- Spaces are designed to create a "home-like" feel, (e.g. including soft furnishings, natural lighting, family photos and "real-life" play materials). Plants, pets and natural elements are incorporated to engage senses, inspire inquiry and discovery, and connect us to the natural world.
- Toys and equipment, along with loose parts, are open ended to encourage self-directed use and foster complex play. Materials that spark curiosity, invite investigation and provide challenges to extend learning are also presented as provocations.
- Our Inclusion Support Team collaborates with educators to design environments and implement strategies which aim to meet the diverse needs within classrooms.
- Our classrooms display documentation of the children's experiences, expressions and accomplishments.
- Viewing outdoor time as an opportunity to explore, create, and investigate, educators enhance outdoor areas through the incorporation of natural elements, loose parts, and open ended materials, and provide resources for active play, creative art experiences, role play, and scientific exploration.
- 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 look for opportunities to explore nature "outside of the fence".
- 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.
- Educators understand that school-age children in particular have a growing need for autonomy, leadership opportunities and peer connections, and we provide opportunities to exercise these regularly through daily routines.

Incorporate Indoor, Outdoor and Active Play, Rest, and Quiet Time into the Day, While Considering Individual Needs of Children

Children's requirements for active play, quiet time, and rest will vary throughout the day, and from child to child. 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?

- Our classes are regularly separated into small groups to reduce waiting time through transitions. We accommodate individual interests by encouraging children to choose their level and area of participation.
- We minimize the number and length of transitions throughout the day 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 a time to slow down, linger and pay attention to our own curiosity and wonder.
- Inclement weather creates an opportunity to provide more varied outdoor play experiences. As long as weather conditions are safe for children to play outside, groups will participate in outdoor play.

Foster the Engagement of, and Ongoing Communication with, Parents Regarding the Program and Their Children

Ongoing, respectful communication between parents and educators 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 our programs 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.
- We work in collaboration with families to support accommodation, and to develop individualized support plans.
- We communicate and share ideas and information in many ways, including:

- daily interactions
- individual family meetings
- Storypark digital app
- 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 (with required background screening)
  - to participate in classroom planning and experiences by sharing interests, skills and hobbies
  - parent workshops and meetings

Involve Local Community Partners to Support Children, Families, and Educators

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

What does this look like in practice?

- We work closely with our local school communities to establish positive, collaborative relationships. Partnerships with the school community can include:
  - involvement in special events (e.g. assemblies, barbeques, concerts etc.)
  - sharing of resources
  - ongoing communication through daily interactions, meetings, and conferences
  - shared professional learning opportunities

- Our programs actively plan for opportunities for community engagement through experiences such as:
  - excursions to local businesses
  - classroom visits from community helpers
  - fundraising efforts to support causes, 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 Services
    - Early Intervention Services
    - Community Living

Support Educators, Students, and Volunteers in Continuous Professional Learning

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

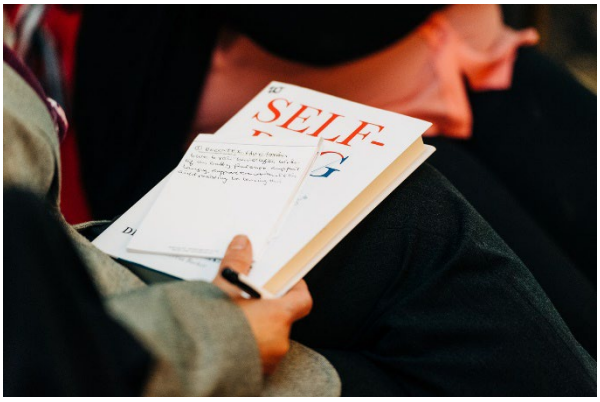
What does this look like in practice?

- We offer opportunities to build capacity, including regular training sessions, workshop opportunities, and an annual agency conference. Educators are required to participate in mandatory training sessions, including First Aid, CPR, Safe Food Handling, Health and Safety and WHMIS.

- Educators are encouraged to complete additional hours of professional learning, and regularly participate in team meetings, staff meetings, regional networking sessions, and communities of practice.

- We engage in proven leadership practices in which we:
    - identify and discuss our common vision, values and goals;
    - promote effective communication;
    - monitor and assess practice; and
    - practice distributive leadership.

- We promote reflective practice and collaboration by encouraging our educators to participate in ongoing dialogue, exploration and experimentation.



Documentation as a Guide for Program Development

Centre documentation is a powerful tool for reflection and assessment, and it supports our efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. Pedagogical documentation helps 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?

- In order to evaluate the impact of strategies outlined in UCCC'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.
  - Ministry of Education licensing reports and municipal/regional quality assurance reports.
  - regular meetings between supervisors and educators, in conjunction with monitoring reviews, to revisit classroom documentation.

- Educators participate in the process of pedagogical documentation by observing children at play and considering how each child makes meaning through their experiences. Our educators consider the significance of their observations, and plan activities and environments to enhance learning and interests.

- 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 encourage children to take an active role in the documentation process, by identifying what experiences they would like to document, and participating in the process in ways such as selecting work samples, creating digital documentation, and writing learning stories.

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

Glossary of Terms

Autonomy
Autonomy is an individual's sense of independence and self-esteem.

Capacity
Capacity refers to each child's ability to learn.

Child-Directed Play
Child-directed play refers to play that is freely chosen by the child and where the child determines the course, rules, and outcome of play.

Distributive Leadership
Distributive leadership refers to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities amongst the team or group.

Emotional Resiliency
Emotional resiliency refers to a child's ability to deal with difficulties in an appropriate way, and to recover from strong emotions.

Empathetic Behaviour
Empathetic behaviour refers to responsive behaviour that reflects an understanding and support of other people's feelings.

Engagement
Engagement describes a participant's level of involvement in an experience. Engagement is demonstrated by the way a participant is actively thinking, curious and interested in that experience.

Inclusion Support Team (IST)
The Inclusion Support Team refers to an organizational group of individuals with specialized training who support our programs with improving accommodations. The IST works in conjunction with Early Intervention Services and in collaboration with educators, families, and supervisors.

Individual Support Plans
Individual Support Plans are developed in collaboration with families which set goals and objectives to support accommodation in our programs.

Loose Parts
Loose Parts refers to open-ended materials that have no pre-determined use. These materials spark curiosity, creativity and foster critical thinking as children determine the role of the material within their play. Loose parts can be natural materials (e.g. sticks, stones, feathers, sand), recycled materials (e.g. boxes, buttons, lids, containers, paper towel rolls), and conceptual (e.g. stories, ideas, light, shadow). The possibilities are endless.

Meaning Mindset
Meaning Mindset refers to a way of thinking about ourselves and our lives as having meaning. It is a positive frame of mind where we perceive ourselves to be competent, capable, and able to facilitate change.

Pedagogy
Pedagogy-is the study of how knowledge and skills are taught or communicated taking into consideration the interactions that occur during learning.

Portfolio
A Portfolio is a collection of documentation and work samples that demonstrate growth and skill. Portfolios can be in paper or digital format.

Provocations
Provocations are experiences that entice children to inquire, discuss, question and engage. Provoking interests can enhance understanding or provoke invite new questions, thoughts and ideas.

Reflective Practice
Reflective practice refers to thinking about and assessing our actions and experiences in order to learn and grow from them.

Self-Regulation
Self-Regulation refers to one's ability to regulate their emotions without external support.

Storypark
Storypark is a digital app that provides a forum for documentation where stories and information can be shared with our families and within our organization.

WHMIS
WHMIS stands for Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Safety and is part of Health and Safety training.