

## Program Statement - 2023

Our mission is to create a co-operative atmosphere wherein parents and qualified teachers work together to maintain a loving, creative, safe, clean and stimulating environment to assist all children, regardless of race, culture or special needs. Our goal is to help these children build a positive self-concept through encouraging their physical, intellectual, cognitive, social and emotional growth. It is also our mission support the families of these children in whatever way possible. At the Elora Cooperative Preschool, we strive to provide a program that will successfully set the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, health, and well being.

Within the context of the Government of Ontario document, How Does Learning Happen, and the belief that children are competent and capable, we will aim to address the four foundations to ensure optimal learning and development. Recognizing that if a child's basic physical needs of nutrition, rest, warmth are met and that if a child's emotional needs - feelings of safety and security and being cared for are in place then a child can have the confidence to interact within an environment that is safe, stimulating, and varied and to begin the processes of exploring and learning on a physical, emotional, social and cognitive level.

**Goal:** To create a warm and happy atmosphere where your child can build a positive self-concept

**Approach:** The Elora Cooperative Preschool is dedicated to making the children feel warm and happy at preschool by engaging with them in soft tones and expressions. It is our philosophy that each child is loved and appreciated for their unique and individual characteristics regardless of their needs or limitations.

**Goal:** To encourage your child's independence and self-responsibility

**Approach:** The Elora Co-Operative Preschool environment is designed to develop a foundation for independence and self-responsibility. We encourage the children to make decisions that reflect their independence and self-responsibility. The staff encourages the children to also take responsibility for their decisions by having conversations with the children about the decisions they have made, whether it was a good decision or another choice would have been more appropriate. The staff will work with the family members and professionals at Canadian Mental Health, Kids Ability, Occupational Therapists etc

to ensure that all children are able to develop this independence and self-responsibility as best as they can.

**Goal:** Promote child-led and active exploration opportunities in carefully planned learning environments

**Approach:** The Elora Co-operative Preschool will provide a diverse variety of open-ended play materials in loosely defined areas so that children can freely use the materials to support their exploration, inquiry and play with bodies, minds and senses. We will ensure that these materials are inclusive of all children, and will provide adaptations to the materials to further ensure all children can manipulate the materials.

**Goal:** To allow the children to develop new relationships with peers and adults

**Approach:** The Elora Co-Operative Preschool environment and playground encourages positive social interaction for cooperative learning, peer teaching and emotional development. The staff will provide ways of communication for children who need assistance communicating with the use of PEC symbols, hand gestures, or IPAD technology.

**Goal:** To encourage your child's whole physical development, to expand his/her intellect, to further develop language skills and to promote your child's inquisitive nature and enjoyment of learning.

**Approach:** The Elora Co-Operative Preschool will provide a wide selection of materials that will encourage development of the whole child. In the classroom and the playground, we will ensure that there are materials that are suited to children's different developmental levels (ie stairs have railings, ramps, bikes or ride on toys that cater to different needs). We will also encourage language skills by having literacy materials readily available for the children to read and write/draw.

**Goal:** To develop a warm and caring environment outside of the Preschool by bringing the indoors out.

**Approach:** The Elora Cooperative Preschool recognizes the need in children to develop their mental and emotional well being by spending as much time outdoors as indoors, if not more. The staff at the Elora Preschool strives to create an outdoor environment that engages the children in exploration and creativity. The community around has many walking trails and forests that are used for this purpose, as well as our large playground space.

## **Belonging**

We strive to welcome every child and their family to the Elora Cooperative Preschool and to create a warm and loving environment where they can feel a part of our preschool community.

We accept that our families come from a variety of backgrounds, with different cultures, languages, religious beliefs and family styles. It is these differences that make our society rich and the Elora Cooperative Preschool welcomes and respects that diversity and uses it to enrich our program.

We will establish a positive and caring, respectful and responsive relationship with children and their families. This begins with a warm intake process that will welcome families into our school with a tour of our premises and conversation around the needs of their child and the role our preschool can play in their child's life. We will further that sense of belonging by engaging in open communication with families about their child through daily conversation, emails, website, meetings, school parties, and activities. We invite parents to respond in the conversations, emails, attend meetings, and fill out a provided satisfaction survey. The Board of Directors along with staff take into serious consideration any recommendations submitted in the suggestion box and will review the programs, practices and policies of the preschool. They will discuss where needs are being met or if improvements or changes need to be implemented to our programs policies or practices to better the quality of our preschool.

We expand our belonging beyond the walls of our preschool by encouraging interaction with our community at large with field trips, visitors to our program, and walks through the community. We also invite the community to the events that we as the preschool provide such as our Easter Egg Hunt, Spaghetti Supper, Halloween Party, Spring Tea etc.

It is our aim to make sure that our children and their families feel valued.

## **Engagement**

We celebrate play and see the natural curiosity and enthusiasm of children as the core of our program.

We strive to help them explore and engage meaningfully with the world around them.

We make experiences available by providing the children with materials that allow them to be involved and focused, to explore with natural curiosity and exuberance. We assist them in being engaged through play and enquiry, to develop skills in problem solving creative thinking, and innovation, all of which are essential to lifelong learning. We, as the staff do this in a manner that is honest kind, respectful and inclusive. We do not intrude on play, but rather we help to solidify the play or take it to new levels by adding suggestions, asking questions, volunteering new vocabulary and adding new materials. We

support their delight, wonder and excitement for learning with our own delight, wonder, and excitement for learning.

We provide an interactive environment for children to explore and investigate ideas through play with different centres, small play equipment, artistic, auditory, sensory materials and books and a variety of literature to expand literacy.

The staff support the growth of relationships between children by helping them with turn taking and modelling play, and assisting the children to find words to aid in conflict resolution.

We provide an environment that is rich in variety of play materials and choices keeping in mind the individual needs and interests of each child. We alter this environment on a regular basis as we see needed by the children's interests.

Upon arrival children and parents will be greeted warmly and by name in an unhurried manner that will allow for a time of conversation and a gentle transition into the program.

We will make available experiences and materials and the involvement of staff that will allow our children to be involved and focused and to explore with natural curiosity and exuberance. We will assist them in being engaged through play and inquiry, to develop skills and problem solving, creative thinking, and innovation, all of which are essential for life- long learning. We will do this in manner that is honest kind respectful and inclusive. We will not intrude on play but rather will help to solidify it or take it to new levels adding suggestions, questions, new materials, in a way that is respectful and kind.

We will support the growth of the relationships between the children by helping them with turn taking, modelling play and strategies for playing together and for finding the words to help them support their peers in play as well as the words to help them develop conflict resolution skills.

We will provide an environment and experiences for children to explore and investigate ideas and interact with others in play with a variety of play centres, small play equipment, artistic materials, auditory materials, sensory materials, books and other materials to expand on literacy. We will move through the program indoors and outdoors, allowing areas for active gross motor play, quiet fine motor play, individual play, one on one play with caregivers, with peers, as well as larger group times. We will do this within the context of a routine but not within the confines of a schedule respecting the needs of each individual child for active play and quieter times.

Our teachers will use their knowledge of Early Childhood Development throughout the classroom to enhance and enrich each child's experiences and allow for their development.

We will support our staff to encourage and enrich interests of children by reflective practices and documentation and discussion. Experiences and learning will be shared among staff and parents and children through classroom displays, photos, as well as daily conversation.

### **Health and Well Being**

We strive to help each child achieve a feeling of self worth, of competence, of health and well being. We ensure a safe and healthy environment for our children our families and our staff.

This includes up to date immunization records for staff and students information for parents regarding childhood illnesses.

The Preschool provides a daily, weekly, and monthly outline of disinfection of premises and toys which adheres to all Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health requirements

Elora Cooperative Preschool is dedicated to the development of healthy children and adults. With the understanding that all good eating habits are developed early in life we have designed our snack and lunch menus to meet Canada's Food Guide and are designed to be healthy and interesting to the children. We put a strong emphasis on fresh fruits vegetables. Our menus are approved in writing by a Nutritionist with WDGPH.

We strive to make meal and snack times a time of unhurried and relaxed interaction with staff sitting at the table with the children adding to the conversations about the food and encouraging the children to be as independent as possible in the choices and serving of the food.

We ensure that any child with a life-threatening illness or allergy has a plan in place for any emergencies. These plans are reviewed with all staff and helping parents before the child attends preschool.

The Elora Cooperative Preschool will ensure the safety of the children at all times. The children will be supervised at all times.

### **Expression**

All forms of expression are valued. We will foster communication through our children's words, their bodies and use of all kinds of materials.

Through bodies, words and use of materials, our children develop capacities for increasingly complex communication. Opportunities to explore many different and varied materials support creativity, problem solving and mathematical behaviours. Our language rich environment supports communication

skills which are the foundation of literacy. We display these expressions around our classroom; on paper, in three dimensions, in photographs and short videos.

### **Role of Staff**

All staff will interact with children and their families in a warm, positive, constructive and meaningful way. Children and parents will be greeted warmly and by name in an unhurried manner that will allow for a time of conversation and a gentle transition into the classroom. Our teachers will use their knowledge of Early Childhood Development and learning throughout the classroom. It is the belief of the preschool that the primary relationship between the child and the teacher that is of the utmost importance. We strive to make sure that every child feels safe, comfortable, and cherished. In addition we recognize the importance of the relationship with families and we strive to make sure that every family feels respected, comfortable and heard.

It is the responsibility of staff to encourage and enrich the interest of children by reflective practices and documentation. Experiences and learning will be shared among staff and parents and children through classroom displays photos as well as daily conversation. ECP values continuous profession growth development. Staff meet formally on a weekly basis as well as informally on a daily basis to view program plans and plan for the future. The preschool will provide the budget and consideration for staff to attend a minimum of 5 activities for professional development. yearly.

Staff are encouraged to attend as many workshops and conferences offered by the Wellington Children's Early Years Community of Professional Development. They are encouraged to attend other workshops, times of fellowship with other ECE's as well as any documented online learning or profession related reading. The staff networks with the other Cooperative preschools in the area once every three months. We will ask for at least 5 avenues verified in a school year.

The Program Statement Handbook as well as all Policies and Procedures will be reviewed with staff, students and Parent Helpers, prior to interacting with the program and on an annual basis thereafter. Review to be recorded and signed.

Staff will be informed and agree with signature to our Behaviour Policy wherein children will always be treated with courtesy and respect , will always involve conversation with parents and will NEVER: permit corporal punishment of any child: deliberate harsh or degrading measures that would humiliate a child

or undermine their self respect; or deprive a child of basic needs including food water shelter clothing or bedding.

It will be the responsibility of supervisor and staff to monitor on a daily basis that all staff will adhere to the practices as laid out in the Program Plan. Any breaches will be reported to the Board of Directors on a weekly basis as well as informally on a daily basis to view program plans and plan for the future.

All Staff and Parent helpers and will review the Handbook, all policies and procedures, and practices prior to interacting in the program and on an annual basis thereafter.

### **Inclusion Policy**

Inclusion at Elora Co-Operative Preschool ensures that staff will work to facilitate attendance by all children regardless of their ability. If any child should have special needs requiring them to have help accessing our program, all efforts will be made to accommodate those needs within the program and/or involvement with other agencies. Partnering with the parents, staff will access the services under the Inclusion Support Services of Wellington County Child Care Services to establish developmental/behavioural goals that will be addressed at the centre.

The partnership between parents/caregivers, support staff, trained professionals and the Elora Co-Operative Preschool Staff is critical to providing the most optimum environment for the child. It is with the help of the of regional staff (ie Inclusion Consultants, or other professionals) that and Individual Support Plan (ISP) is made. The developmental goals are reviewed with the parents, staff, and Inclusion Consultant annually.