

Working Together in a Shared Space

Updated for 2019-2020

Information and considerations for Child Care Licensees, School Boards, Schools, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABS)

The Ministry of Education supports an integrated early years and child care system in which school board, child care, and EarlyON Child and Family Centre professionals work in partnership to provide seamless, high quality programs for children throughout the day. School principals, child care providers/professionals, and EarlyON Child and Family Centre supervisors, children's recreation providers and other staff work together to ensure that shared space is available on an ongoing basis to provide consistent and seamless learning and care environments for children. The following resource is meant to support collaboration in creating a welcoming environment for children and families.



All children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential and experience.

Opportunity for reflection:

If we hold this belief of children, **then** we respect their right to have access to the same materials and experiences to extend their thinking and learning throughout their day in the shared space.

The following principles are intended as a guide for creating a seamless and integrated culture where well-being is valued, and children experience a strong sense of belonging, engagement and freedom to express their ideas:

How is the child's experience being considered?

- Children are invited to share their thoughts about important considerations for shared space.
- Decisions about room/space selections and existing resources meets the needs of the children attending the before and after school program. Whenever possible, the room chosen for before and after school programs should be used by the same age group during the school day. This encourages seamlessness and stability as children stay in the same classroom throughout their day. Therefore, programs for four and five year olds should be located in Kindergarten classrooms, wherever possible.
- Strategies are developed collaboratively to share, prepare and care for the environment/materials, so children can work on projects over an extended period.
- Expectations around shared spaces, materials, and resources are discussed and reinforced (i.e., use of cubbies/materials) to promote inclusion as well as a culture of shared rights, responsibilities and respect for the environment, belongings and each other throughout the day.

- Schedules are coordinated among professionals with the input of children and families for the use of shared space beyond the classroom (e.g., gymnasium, playground, kitchen facilities, library, staff room etc.).
- Collaboration is intentional for the thoughtful development, renewal and design of the outdoor learning space with the input of children and families.
- Pedagogical documentation is developed in shared spaces with children and their parents/caregivers to enable ideas to grow and to ensure educators' work will be mutually supported.



Learning and development happen within the context of relationships among children, families, educators, and their environments.

The Kindergarten Program, 2016



Families are composed of people who are competent and capable, curious, and rich in experience. Families love their children and want the best for them. Families are experts on their children. They are the first and foremost powerful influence on children's learning, development, health and well-being.

Opportunity for reflection:

If we hold this belief of families, **then** we invite parents/caregivers to be involved in their child's learning and strive to create an environment that welcomes children, their families and their ideas, perspectives and contributions.

The following principles are intended as a guide for creating a seamless and integrated culture where well-being is valued, and families experience a strong sense of belonging, engagement and freedom to express their ideas:

How is the family's experience being considered?

- Parents/caregivers are invited to offer their perspectives about important considerations for shared space.
- Communication boards, newsletters and information on websites are developed collaboratively across programs where information is accessible and meaningful to parents/caregivers.
- Intentional spaces are created for pedagogical documentation to invite parents/caregivers to reflect on experiences throughout the day and to make visible children's thinking, learning and relationships with their environment and the educators. Spaces for pedagogical documentation are shared in ways that invite parents to contribute their ideas as partners in the learning process.

- A common philosophy is established to reinforce classrooms and schools as community spaces where children and their families feel a strong sense of belonging.



Educators are competent and capable, curious and rich in experience. They are knowledgeable, caring, reflective and resourceful professionals. They bring diverse social, cultural and linguistic perspectives. They collaborate with others to create engaging environments and experiences to foster children’s learning and development.

Opportunity for reflection:

If we hold this belief of educators, **then** we will collaborate to create conditions of trust and respect in order to effectively share space, materials and pedagogical documentation, which is integral to learning for all.

|| *The Kindergarten and Before and After School Program, “is a single program with a single pedagogical and curriculum approach, planned and delivered by qualified educators using common space and resources.” Pascal, 2009* ||

The following principles are intended as a guide for creating a seamless and integrated culture where well-being is valued, and all educators experience a strong sense of belonging, engagement and freedom to express their ideas:

How is the educator’s experience being considered?

- Educators invest in developing reciprocal relationships and collaborate in ways that honour and respect children, families and each other.
- Educators work together to establish a shared culture where reflective practice is nurtured and regular opportunities to meet for shared learning and professional dialogue are supported.
- Shared space is created for accessing relevant research and documents for shared study and dialogue by all educators.
- Curriculum documents and relevant resources e.g. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years; Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children; Think, Feel, Act: Empowering Children in the Middle Years; The Kindergarten Program* (2016), are shared and promoted across programs to build cohesion.
- Professional learning opportunities include educators from all programs whenever possible and involve the study of pedagogical documentation to better identify, understand and support children’s learning strategies.
- Educators can visit each other’s programs to strengthen program alignment, build relationships and create a strong sense of well-being, belonging, engagement and expression for all professionals.

Build and foster relationships through:

- Regular opportunities for school and child care staff to collaborate.
- Opportunities for secretarial, custodial and other staff to meet with the child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centre, as well as school staff in an effort to build collective understanding of this shared culture.
- Leadership meetings are regularly scheduled throughout the year to support and nurture this shared culture, and to provide updates that may impact either program.
- Consider sharing invitations to school or child care special events.
- Consider the inclusion of all staff working with individual children in transition meetings for children as appropriate, with parent permission.



Evidence from diverse fields of study tells us that children grow in programs where adults are caring and responsive. Children succeed in programs that focus on active learning through exploration, play, and inquiry. Children thrive in programs where they and their families are valued as active participants and contributors.

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014

Logistical Considerations:

- Develop a handbook as a guide to support all staff focused on the relationship between child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and schools.
- Ensure exterior and interior signage is inclusive of school, child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and families.
- Develop a conflict management process that is clear to all professionals sharing the space.
- Develop processes for communication with casual or supply educators to ensure understanding of transition procedures.
- Establish strategies to notify child care providers in a timely manner when the child care program must be relocated to an alternate, licensed space due to parent interviews or other school events.
- Develop strategies for efficient set up and clean up routines for the incoming school or child care program.
- Ensure primary and alternate spaces to be used by the child care program are licensed, including lunch rooms, the library, the gymnasium and staff room (if applicable) and minimize any relocation of the child care program, but if necessary relocate only to licensed alternate space with mutual agreement.

Health, Safety and Security Considerations:

- Establish emergency evacuation and inclement weather procedures for both regular day and before and/or after school programs, including when children in the regular day program may need to enter the program earlier than scheduled.
- Ensure that fire exits are mapped and posted and that fire plan updates include the child care program, the EarlyON Child and Family Centre as well as before and after school program providers.
- Ensure, when possible, the child care centre, the EarlyON Child and Family Centre and the before and after school provider are notified in advance and that the child care centre is included in any fire, lock down or evacuation drills.
- Ensure licensing requirements are maintained when emergency relocation of the child care program to an alternate space in the school is needed.
- Discuss an approach to address health and safety issues and review potential security issues (e.g., parent drop off/pick up, intercom systems etc.).

Ministry of Education Supporting Resources:

Professional resources such as the following are available to support you and your team in critical reflection and continuous learning:

- [*How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014*](#) is a professional learning resource to support program development and pedagogy in child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres and before and after school programs. Based on an understanding of children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential, it includes goals for children and expectations for programs organized around four foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. Pedagogical approaches highlight the importance of learning through exploration, play and inquiry.
- [*The Kindergarten Program, 2016*](#) describes critical information about the appropriate pedagogical approaches as well as the four frames and overall expectations of the Kindergarten Program, which reflect the knowledge and skills children are expected to demonstrate by the end of this two-year program.
- [*Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children, 2013*](#) includes research briefs and videos on topics such as, environment, self-regulation, relationships, pedagogical documentation, pedagogical leadership, inclusion, and parent engagement.
- [*Think, Feel, Act: Empowering Children in the Middle Years, 2018*](#) includes research briefs that support continuous professional learning for those working in after-school settings with children in the middle years. Topics include nurturing Indigenous identity and belonging, resilience, positive relationships, Francophone identity and supporting children's connections with nature.
- [*Early Years Accommodations in Schools Reference Guide, 2018*](#) is a resource document developed with the support of the Ministry's Working Group on Early Years

Accommodation Costs in Schools, which was established in spring 2017 and provided advice on sharing space in schools.

For other relevant information and resources:

- [*The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*](#)
- [*Regulations under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*](#) include licensing standards including age groupings, ratios, group size and staff qualifications. Provisions regarding local service system planning and funding for child care and early years programs are also set out in regulation.
- [*The Education Act*](#) and [*Ontario Regulation 221/11 Extended Day and Third-Party Programs*](#)
- [*Before and After School Programs Kindergarten – Grade 6: Policies and Guidelines for School Boards, Sept 2019*](#)