



Program Statement for Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre

This Program Statement is provided to prospective parents of Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre and forms part of the Parent Handbook. It describes goals and approaches used in our Childcare programs and reflects the requirements of the Child Care Early Years Act 2014 which is to be used to guide licensed early years programs. It supports Ontario Pedagogy and the vision for the Early Years through continuous learning based upon the document How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years.

Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre sees children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential, additionally acknowledging them with a holistic view, as beings of body, soul and spirit. Thus, the aim of our curriculum is to meet the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of the developing and growing child while fostering reverence and respect for the earth and all people.

We believe children are creative beings who learn best through self-initiated play and the experience of practical activities, free to explore their own interests and grow their imaginations. Our environments are designed to allow children to explore the properties of open-ended materials, using them imaginatively to develop their creativity capacity, competency for problem-solving skills and disposition for lifelong learning.

As children learn through imitation, meaningful work and household chores are a big part of our daily life together. Caregivers are often occupied with caring for the environment through such activities as sweeping, washing, gardening, as well as the bodily care of the children. Children can participate and thus build healthy habits and skills. Their experience of these predictable rhythms and routines, helps them to feel secure, with an additional sense of satisfaction and

purpose. This state of security and calmness enriches the quality of their play, to be more focused and deeper.

The home-like environment that we create, both inside and outside, is designed to allow children to experience a feeling of wonder and reverence for the world around them. The warmth and intention that we bring to our interactions with children allow them to feel safe and valued. The children's physical, social and cognitive development is fostered through creative arts, storytelling, song, cooperative activities, daily walks to the park and outdoor time in the garden. We believe that an atmosphere of joy and goodness, nutritious organic meals and healthy movement contributes to their brain development, healthy immune system, self-regulation skills and general wellbeing.

The Physical Environment

Our program rooms are designed to be a calm, aesthetically beautiful and welcoming environment similar, to a home, to create a gentle and gradual bridge to the child's expanded experience of the world. Snacks and meals are prepared and cooked in our on-site kitchen. Children have their own beds with warm blankets and pillows to nap or rest on. The walls are painted in soft pastel shades. Decorations are minimal, allowing the beautiful and natural materials in the room to exude warmth and provide pleasing sensorial experiences. Materials from nature abound - wooden play stands, silk play cloths, pieces of wood that serve many purposes to the child's growing imagination, a nature table or corner, puppets of silk and felted wool. Great care is taken to create a secure space from which children can experience, play and explore the world around them.

The programming extends further into the outdoors, where play allows for exploration of nature and caring for the garden. When children see their caregivers gardening or raking leaves, they too, want to participate in caring for the garden. Opportunity abounds for sensory play with sand, water and snow. The children practice their gross motor skills walking to and playing in the nearby park and playground.

Role of the Educator

Our educators are thoughtful reflective learners who continually work to develop their practice. We take seriously our responsibilities, including the trust that families have given us to care for their children, and continually strive to keep the child at the centre of our practice. Our relationships are based on love, respect and care for each child who we view as unique in body, soul, and spirit. Our educators actively observe the children in their care, carry them in their meditation, and seek to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their individual development. Their ongoing study of child and human development, artistic, and meditative practices, are essential ways in which educators

find renewal and strengthen their craft. Their devotion to this task awakens them to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community.

We understand that children learn best through imitation and our educators recognize the important role they play in being a person worthy of imitation. The meaningful work and chores that they engage in provides a rich opportunity for children to absorb the mood, gesture, and devotion to the task that the educator brings to their work. Chores that are repeatedly done in the classroom are orchestrated to allow children to flow in and out of these activities, inviting them to engage fully for as long or as little as they like. In this way, out of imitation, a healthy will force is developed through children's joyful participation to the task at hand.

In our enriching programming, we work with the Ministry of Education's learning foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression allowing children to grow with a feeling of security, to the fullest of their potential. Through our interactions with others we strive to build acceptance, learn to take care of others, and experience community. The qualities of love and emotional warmth create the basis for a child's healthy development to feel safe and valued. These intentions form the basis of our interactions between the adult caregiver and each child, in the children's behavior towards one another, and among the adults and families at the school.

Seasonal festivals are a highlight in our program for children and they are involved in the preparation of these special times. These festivals also serve to bring families and the community together so that meaningful relationships with staff, parents, children and community are fostered.

Our holistic perspective of the whole child can be considered from various angles. In this document, we will use the following sections:

a) Promoting the Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-being of the Children;

Goal:

Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre is aware that the early years of the child's life set the foundation for their future health and wellbeing. We understand that the first step in establishing and nurturing health, safety and wellbeing for the children in our programs is through loving, warm and nurturing relationships with their caregivers, in a safe and secure environment.

Approaches Used:

- A variety of nutritious, organic (when possible) food choices is provided for snacks and lunch, to promote physical health and good nutrition habits.

- Encouraging a healthy table culture, by respecting children's appetites allowing them to eat the amount they indicate is right for them, providing adequate time and space to eat, and assuring meals are eaten in a harmonious mood.
- Shared snack and meal times are served family style, supporting the child's feeling of belonging to a group.
- Regular, predictable daily and weekly rhythms and routines supports a sense of wellbeing through predictability and security.
- Educators communicate with parents regarding each child's needs for nutrition, sleep, and warmth.
- Children's learning and sense of well-being flourishes in calm, peaceful and safe environments free of technology, where plenty of fresh air, natural lighting, and a reduction of loud noise and clutter are offered.
- Educators maintain certification in Standard First Aid and CPR.
- Policies and procedures ensure educators maintain safe practices with the children, such as supervising children adequately, ensuring the continued safety of equipment and the environment, good hygiene and safe sleep procedures, and appropriate sanitary practices to limit the spread of communicable illness.
- We recognize that children will benefit most in an environment that is respectful and welcoming towards their families, and that includes their involvement and support.

(b) Supporting Positive and Responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff;

Goal:

Star Seedlings strives to promote a sense of belonging for children and their families by creating positive interactions and through collaboration. We understand that relationships of trust are the basis for learning and cooperation. Educators respect and regard the children positively to help them become capable communicators. Every child is encouraged and given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility and social skills through the secure relationships created with their caregiver and each other.

Approaches Used:

- Educators work in the knowledge that positive, caring and respectful relationships are the foundation for optimal learning, development, health and well-being.
- Educators model warm, caring interpersonal relationships, by verbal or non-verbal expressions and gestures which the child may freely imitate.

- Through imitating the adults in all their interactions and activities, children learn to take responsibility for themselves, each other and their surrounding environment.
- Educators see each child as a unique individual, full of gifts to be shared with others
- Educators strive to convey that the world is a good place.
- Children are given the opportunity to resolve their own conflicts when appropriate, under the loving and watchful guidance of the educators.
- Educators strive to interact with colleagues and families with authentic interest and in a respectful manner.

(c) Encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate;

Goal:

Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with their body, mind and senses, in different ways. Self-initiated and self-directed play is encouraged in our programming, as it helps the children learn to trust their own initiative to explore, interact and communicate. Educators are near-by to offer support to modulate emotions and maintain a positive atmosphere. Each child's needs are considered and respected in the rhythm of the day, supporting their individuality, developing ability to self-regulate and growing sense of autonomy.

Approaches Used:

- The strong daily rhythms and weekly routines, with alternating structured and unstructured times, help children to know what to expect and thus feel secure and confident to reach out and interact with others.
- The calm, uncluttered, supportive environment assists children in self-regulation, as it allows them to move freely to focus their energies on exploration, inquiry and increasingly complex social play, managing distractions, while learning to inhibit their impulses and understand the consequences of their actions.
- Consistent boundaries are given to the children, based on their needs and developmental stage, thus allowing them to know and feel secure within the framework of the environment.
- Attention is given to children's varied ways of communicating, both verbally and non-verbally. Educators facilitate successful communication between children by helping them to listen, hear each other, and express themselves to one another. Educators will seek to understand more deeply what children are trying to express and help them to verbalize their feelings and self-regulate.
- Educators are continually learning about how to create learning environments and programming that helps support children's self-regulation—to help children remain or return to a state of calm.

(d) Foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry;

Goal:

At Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre, children experience a variety of safe, age appropriate and interesting environments that nurture their natural curiosity for the world they live in and create a sense of belonging. We believe that everything in a young child's environment has an impact on them inwardly and outwardly. Through play, exploration and inquiry the young child can develop skills and their emerging independence and self-confidence. Parents are encouraged to engage and initiate meaningful, positive communication with educators to find ways to support their children as curious learners.

Approaches Used:

- Children have opportunities to meet challenges and take appropriate risks so as to practise skills and extend their learning in their self-directed play.
- Educators encourage each child to explore and follow their own curiosity, while responding to the child's discoveries and sense of wonder.
- Children are presented with rich language to model, through songs, games, storytelling and puppet plays.
- Children are offered open ended, beautiful, natural materials to use in a myriad of ways. Toys may be suggestive, but not prescriptive of their use, so as to foster the children's exploration and imagination.
- Children are able to test out their ideas and language, through self-directed and free play.
- Children are provided long periods of unhurried time to engage in sustained, complex play and inquiry.
- Child-directed, open-ended free play allows relationships to evolve gradually, at a pace comfortable and age appropriate for the children.

(e) Provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences;

Goal:

Children are encouraged to create their own learning situations through self-initiated, creative play and join in in educator led activities. Play is the work of the young child, enhancing their social, emotional cognitive and physical skills. Educators listen and observe this play, developing

a deeper understanding of the interests and perspective of the children in their care. Then they can facilitate learning experiences with patience and care, to help the children become motivated and independent learners.

Approaches Used:

- Educators engage in daily domestic activities such as, folding laundry or sweeping the floor. Children are welcome to join in as they wish.
- With the youngest children, educators may initiate activities and explorations, but as children mature, educators will initiate less, allowing children ample opportunity to explore new ideas and expand old ones.
- Through the rhythms and routines of the day, child-initiated activities are alternated with educator-guided activities such as meal, rest or story time.
- Educators are not attached to expected outcomes or determining the direction of the play. Rather, their role is to engage with the children as needed, to support their play and enhance their experiences. Children choose activities they want to be involved in during free play time.
- Children are respected for their unique gifts and are supported in developing at their own pace.
- Outdoors in the garden, children may choose to join the educators in raking, shoveling, or gardening. These 'domestic' activities often reappear in the open-ended play children initiate themselves.

(f) Plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported;

Goal:

The environment is a key factor in supporting children's development and learning experiences. Because young children are open and deeply impressionable through their senses, the use of natural materials in a calm, uncluttered environment with no technology, supports their learning. When manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby supporting new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. When children experience processes, such as the steps of doing laundry, they make a deep connection to the community and world they live in.

Approaches Used:

- Educators create peaceful and calm environments, indoors and outdoors, to support positive interactions and feelings of well-being in the children, which supports a learning experience.
- Educators allow enough time for children to move at their own pace, initiating and exploring their world through play. When play is self-directed, the children feel free to explore as their curiosity suggests, allowing them to set the course of their exploration and degree of learning.
- A care-based relationship allows educators time to respond to individual children's needs and builds trust between them.
- Educators give much consideration to the quality of the environment. Toys and play materials offered are simple, so that the children can be imaginative and active in their learning.
- When educators are active and purposeful in their daily tasks, children can participate or imitate the activities through their play, thus learning how to care for their environment, themselves and each other, as well as refining useful skills.

(g) 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 child care;

Goal:

The physical space, both indoors and outdoors, reflects a home-like environment where children can identify with a consistent routine that encompasses active play, rest and quiet time. The rhythm of the day includes outdoor play both in the morning and afternoon, allowing for physical movement in the natural outdoors. Educators support regular rhythm and patterns of activities in the classroom that engage the children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive developmental needs.

Approaches Used:

- A wide range of sensory experiences are available to the children, both indoors and outside.
- Each day includes generous time for free play indoors and outside.
- The playgarden provides safe and stimulating outdoor play through caring for the garden, exploring elements of sand, water and snow, while providing lots of fresh air.
- Daily walks to the park offer opportunity to challenge and develop variety of motor skills, as well as experience changes in the seasons. We ensure the children are well-dressed for the weather conditions.

- Quiet, focused activities are available in a range of forms as children need them.
- Children are supported during rest time after lunch, in their cot with their own, individual doll and gentle harp playing.

(h) Foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children;

Goal:

Parents and educators share ongoing communication to support each other about observations of the children at home and the Centre. The partnership between parents and Educators helps support the child's sense of security and well-being, as they participate in a positive, authentic and open relationships. This bond serves to support the child's developmental needs for consistency and clarity.

Approaches Used:

- Educators recognize that children grow up in families with diverse experiences, cultural perspectives, and understand that all families have their own individual expression.
- The first contact with a family may be at an Open House, tour or community event.
- A Family Intake meeting is an interview of inquiry for the family to learn about the Centre and for us to learn about the family and hear the child's personal 'story' or biography. It sets the stage for a relationship as partners, to support the children's development.
- Educators communicate daily with parents during drop-off and pick-up times, sharing information about the child's night/day and any concerns, issues or questions each may have. It is also a time to share the child's successes and milestones.
- If a parent or educator would like to discuss something at length, a phone time or meeting will be scheduled.
- Annual educator/parent interviews are available to discuss children's development and progress.
- Parents are invited to community events such as Gardening Day, Lantern Walk and the Summer Picnic.
- Educators send regular email correspondence and updates to parents regarding programming.
- The Centre offers parenting workshops, on common child rearing topics, such as sleep and bedtime routines.

(i) Involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff;

Goal:

Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre is committed to engaging with the local community and partners, to involve them in supporting the children, families and educators of our Centre.

Approach:

There are many community partners—individuals, organizations and agencies who can offer support to our children, families and educators in many ways. We wish to collaborate with these partners and create opportunities to build relationships and access resources, on behalf of the children in our care, and their families.

(j) Support staff or others who interact with children in relation to continuous professional learning;

Goal:

Star Seedlings Family and Childcare Centre is committed to hiring, training and fairly compensating all educators and staff. We hire individuals who have a positive and sensitive attitude towards children, who are conscious in providing a nurturing and secure environment in which the children may develop and grow holistically. Formal professional learning is vital, but we also know that the most central professional growth happens day-to-day, as our educators co-learn with children and each other.

Approaches Used:

- Educators have either completed training in the field of early childhood and are registered with the College of Early Childhood educators or are actively participating in studies to achieve this goal.
- Daily personal reflection is an expectation of our educators. Consideration of each child, how they engaged and reacted during the day, and what they might need from the educator is an active practice for our educators. This reflection informs and supports the interaction between the educator and child for the next day.
- Educators document on their observations of each individual child and the group as a whole.

- Educators meet regularly to discuss and review their practise with the children, sharing issues and opportunities in support of the children’s development.
- Mentoring, attending lectures and continuing professional development workshops and trainings update the educators’ knowledge developments in CCEYA, including health and safety. We have an annual Professional Development day which all educators and staff attend, where we upgrade our understanding of Waldorf pedagogy.

(k) Document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and their families. O. Reg. 137/15, s. 46 (3); O. Reg. 126/16, s. 32 (2-4).

Goal:

Our programming focuses on core values of Waldorf pedagogy. We believe that early childhood education is foundational for life- long learning. We strive to include many different aspects within our program to create a well-rounded, interesting and exciting experience for the children with whom we are privileged to spend our days. We feel that children need the opportunity to discover how to interact with others in a safe and nurturing atmosphere as they develop their self-worth, confidence, and communication skills. Our educators and staff communicate and listen effectively and purposefully with families and each other.

Approaches Used:

- Documentation includes a monthly log of what has occurred in the class,
- Annual meetings with each family present opportunities to review the impact of the Childcare program and its approaches on the both their child and family.
- As required by the Ministry of Education’s Child Care Early Years Act, this program statement shall be reviewed by all new staff, student teachers, and volunteers prior to interacting with children, annually thereafter, and any time that this statement is modified.