

Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy

This policy statement, together with the regulations that guide program development, pedagogy and practice in licensed child care settings, is intended to strengthen the quality of programs and ensure high quality experiences that lead to positive outcomes in relation to children's learning, development, health and well-being.

There is perhaps no relationship that holds greater responsibility or reward than the relationships we develop with children. As educators, as family members, as policy makers, or as administrators, we all know that the stronger our partnerships and the deeper and more valuable our connections, the greater the benefit. It's an investment that allows us all to grow.

How does learning happen? What relationships and environments support it? What actions support children's learning? What does theory and research tell us? These are questions with constantly evolving and shifting answers. While there are general principles and knowledge we can refer to, we must always think, feel, and act in ways that reflect the environment, the circumstances, and most importantly the children, families, and colleagues we have before us in every unique situation. As we question, research, reflect, respond, and co-construct our understanding of the world around us with children and families, we gain new perspectives and new and more complex questions arise. This document is not so much about providing all the answers, but rather is intended to provoke questions for it is in exploring our questions that learning happens.

"Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experience in the environment." -*Maria Montessori*

About our School

Bright Child is an Eco-Friendly Montessori School that strives to sustain the planet with our business practices and in the way we educate children. Our goal here is to nurture the curiosity, creativity, and imagination born within each child. We will immerse children in nature by visiting forests and exploring our outdoor classrooms. We will plant seeds in our classroom, watch them grow in our gardens, and serve our harvest for lunch. We will inspire the children through music, movement, instruments, and dance. We will focus on fundamentals in our classrooms that are crucial for development and provide challenging tasks for children when the timing is right.

About Montessori

The Montessori Method of education is designed to help the children to help themselves. They are encouraged to develop the fullness of their individual human potential through independence, inner discipline and discovery. It is our objective to provide children with the structure, groundwork, knowledge and social skills to successfully move into their future.

Our classrooms are equipped with areas which promote specific growth patterns and satisfy sensitive periods of development. We have five areas of the classroom. These prepared

environments allow the child to learn through exploration at their own pace.

Practical Life – Providing practical, “real” life experiences.

Sensorial – Promotes essential development through the senses.

Cultural Studies– Enhances the arts, and teaches geography, history and science.

Mathematics – Begins with concrete learning of quantity and moves to abstract pencil and paper activities.

Language Arts – This is based on phonetic learning moving to non-phonetic language.

Bright Child Montessori holds true to the belief that each child is of supreme importance in our world. We work to guide each child to knowledge, empowerment and a lifelong love of learning while preparing them to be active members of a peaceful, global community. We strive to nurture each child intellectually, physically and emotionally through Montessori practices, *How Does Learning Happen?* as well as through our own examples of behaviour and habit.

An Understanding of Children, Families, and Educators

The way we view others influences how we interact with them. *How Does Learning Happen?* promotes a shared view of children, families, and educators that will help shape all aspects of your early years program. Specifically:

Children

We view children as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. They grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his or her surroundings, and deserves the opportunity to succeed. When we recognize children as capable and curious, we are more likely to deliver programs and services that value and build on their strengths and abilities.

Families

Families are composed of individuals 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 most powerful influence on children’s learning, development, health, and well-being. Families bring diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Families should feel that they belong, are valuable contributors to their children’s learning, and deserve to be engaged in a meaningful way.

Educators

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. Educators are lifelong learners. They take responsibility for their own learning and make decisions about ways to integrate knowledge from theory, research, their own experience, and their understanding of the individual children and families they work with. Every educator should feel he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor, and deserves the opportunity to engage in meaningful work.



Figure 2. The four foundations ensure optimal learning and development. These foundations inform the goals for children and expectations for programs.

Foundations, Goals, and Expectations

How Does Learning Happen? sets out goals for children and expectations for programs, organized around four foundations that are central to children’s learning and growth. The goals for children provide a basis for thinking about and creating the kinds of environments and experiences that are meaningful for children. They are not meant to measure children’s development but rather to guide practice. The expectations for programs provide ideas and examples of ways in which programs can move towards realizing the goals for children.

The Four Foundations of How Does Learning Happen?

How Does Learning Happen? is organized around four foundational conditions that are important for children to grow and flourish: *Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression.*

These foundations, or ways of being, are a vision for all children’s future potential and a view of what they should experience each and every day. These four foundations apply regardless of age, ability, culture, language, geography, or setting. They are aligned with the Kindergarten program. They are conditions that children naturally seek for themselves.

| FOUNDATIONS | GOALS FOR CHILDREN | EXPECTATIONS FOR PROGRAMS |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Belonging | Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world. | Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them. |
| Well-Being | Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being. | Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self. |
| Engagement | Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses. | Early childhood programs provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry. |
| Expression | Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways. | Early childhood programs foster communication and expression in all forms. |

Belonging refers to a sense of connectedness to others, an individual’s experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, and the natural world.

Well-being addresses the importance of physical and mental health and wellness. It incorporates capacities such as self-care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills.

Engagement suggests a state of being involved and focused. When children are able to explore the world around them with their natural curiosity and exuberance, they are fully engaged. Through this type of play and inquiry, they develop skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, and innovating, which are essential for learning and success in school and beyond.

Expression or communication (to be heard, as well as to listen) may take many different forms. Through their bodies, words, and use of materials, children develop capacities for increasingly complex communication. Opportunities to explore materials support creativity, problem solving, and mathematical behaviours. Language-rich environments support growing communication skills, which are foundational for literacy. A focus on these foundations throughout all aspects of early years programs ensures optimal learning and healthy development.

Our Commitment to Quality

Quality is a central component of the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework and programming will be guided by the principles of the Early Learning Framework:

- Early childhood sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, health, and well-being.
- Play and inquiry are learning approaches that capitalize on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance.

- An intentional, planned program supports learning and smooth transitions.
- Partnerships with families and communities are essential.
- Respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion is vital.
- Knowledgeable, responsive, and reflective educators are essential.

Research

Neuroscience, developmental and social psychology, economics, medical research and education, and early childhood theory and studies have all added to our knowledge of the early years. Over the past decade research across these disciplines gives us a dramatic and consistent story. High-quality early childhood settings are associated with immediate and long-term positive outcomes for children. Studies show that children who attend high-quality early childhood programs where they experience warm, supportive relationships are happier, less anxious, and more motivated to learn than children who do not.

Recurring themes from research, theory, and practice suggest that high-quality early childhood programs:

- Establish positive, responsive relationships with children and their families;
- Value children as individuals and as active and competent contributors with their own interests and points of view;
- Recognize the connection between emotional wellbeing and social and cognitive development and the importance of focusing on these areas holistically;
- Provide environments and experiences for children to explore ideas, investigate their theories, and interact with others in play;
- Engage with families and support each child within the context of his or her family, recognizing that family and child well-being are inextricably linked;
- Provide ongoing opportunities for educators to engage in critical reflection and discussion with others about pedagogy and practice to support continuous professional learning and growth

Goals for Children

- Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world.

- Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being.
- Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses.
- Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways.

“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor to always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”

- Maria Montessori

Questions for Reflection

Ideas and inspiration happen as we reflect on our practice. Critical reflection involves not only questioning and rethinking our actions, but also considering whether they make sense in the light of research, theory, and what we know about the children and families in our program. *How Does Learning Happen?* provides questions that help guide you in reflection about your practice, whether on your own or in collaboration with a colleague, a staff team, or the children and their families. These questions serve as a starting point for challenging existing practices and acting on the goals for children and expectations for programs.

What does this mean for me?

How Does Learning Happen? doesn't mean doing more but looking at what you are already doing with a different focus. It has entry points and ideas to reflect on as you make decisions in your practice every day. It's about being aware of what you're doing and why you're doing it – for example:

- Thinking about how a view of children as competent and capable can be reflected in your environment and interactions;
- Keeping well-being, engagement, belonging, and expression at the forefront when planning your program; and
- Using pedagogical documentation to learn more about the children in your program and to make their learning visible

How will stronger connections with families benefit children?

How Does Learning Happen? encourages strong, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with families. Including the child's family in discussions and taking the time to make daily connections with them, whether in person or by other means (e.g., sending notes or emails, posting information on bulletin boards), is critical to the success of an early years program.

When you recognize and build on the strengths of families and the love they have for their children, everyone benefits. Families know their child best and have much to contribute to

effective practice in the early years setting. Similarly, your own knowledge and experience as an educator can benefit families in their relationships with their children.

HiMama and 'How Does Learning Happen?'

HiMama can be used in licensed child care centres to meet expectations set out in How Does Learning Happen? It is important that we apply HiMama in different ways to provide environments and experiences for children that align to the four foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.

| FOUNDATIONS | GOALS FOR CHILDREN | EXPECTATIONS FOR PROGRAMS | HIMAMA ENABLEMENT |
|-------------|--|--|---|
| Belonging | Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world. | Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them. | HiMama enables connections between home and the early childhood program, invites families to participate in children’s experiences, and builds trusting partnerships with families. |
| Well-Being | Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being. | Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self. | HiMama enables educators to observe patterns in children’s health and provide consistency in patterns of eating, physical activity, and sleep. |
| Engagement | Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses. | Early childhood programs provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry. | HiMama enables educators to plan environments and experiences slightly in advance of children’s current capabilities to provoke learning. |
| Expression | Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways. | Early childhood programs foster communication and expression in all forms. | HiMama enables educators to document children’s communication to revisit thoughts and ideas expressed and foster further expression. |

*Our Commitment to All Children “What we want is to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child.” – **George Bernard Shaw***

Goals for our Staff at Bright Child Montessori

All staff will promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of each child by providing a clean and safe environment, nutrition based on the Canada’s Food Guide, access to drinking water throughout the day, limited transitions, eliminating any environmental issues that may cause undue stress to the child, unnecessary disruptions to play and reducing hazards that may cause injury. Educators will familiarize themselves with all information concerning any medical conditions, exceptionalities, allergies, food restrictions, medication requirements, and parental preferences in respect to diet, exercise and rest time.

All staff will support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, and child care providers. The Administrator and Supervisor will support this through the hiring of qualified, responsive, and well trained Early Childhood Educators who support families in their role as primary caregivers, and understand the needs of each child as an individual.

All staff will encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way, and support their ability to self-regulate; acknowledging that each child is competent, curious and rich in potential. Staff will support self-regulation in children (defined as the child's ability to gain control of bodily functions, manage powerful emotions and maintain focus and attention) Self-regulation in early development is influenced by a child's relationship with the important adults in that child's life, including the ECEs in the program. All staff will provide the experiences, support and encouragement that help young children learn to self-regulate, which is a crucial component of quality care.

All staff will foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry by providing a variety of activities, and an environment rich in content, that encourages choices, and active play, supported by qualified, attentive and interactive Early Childhood Educators

All Staff will provide child-initiated and adult supported experiences. The Early Childhood Educators will observe the children and use that information to plan and create a positive learning environment that is based on the interests of the child, and supported by all the adults in the child care environment. Educators will be responsible for introducing new ideas, interests, facts, concepts, skills and experiences to widen the child's knowledge and life experiences.

All Early Childhood Educators need to be reflective practitioners who learn about children through listening, observation, documentation, and discussion with others, families in particular, to understand children as unique individuals. They will observe and listen to learn how children make meaning through their experiences in the world around them, and use this to have meaningful interactions, and engage children on a daily basis.

Each child will experience indoor, and a minimum of two hours of outdoor play (weather permitting) daily, as well as a time to rest and sleep if needed, quiet and active times, always being mindful of each child's needs and parental direction.

Regular and ongoing communication with parents is an important component of the day. Detailed daily reports will be sent to families at the end of each day through HiMama. Further communication is encouraged in person, by phone, i-message, and e-mail. Communication needs to come from all members of the organization, Administrator, Supervisor, and all teachers.

Parents will be directed to resources outside of the centre if necessary, and community partners such as early year's services, speech therapists, support services, occupational therapists, counsellors, etc., this will be an important part of the centres support to all children and their families.

We view the community as a valuable resource and our educators plan learning opportunities to

engage the community in our programs. We seek out opportunity to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community.

The organization will provide ongoing opportunities for educators to engage in critical reflection and discussion with others about pedagogy and practice, to support continuous professional learning.

All staff will build a climate of trust, honesty and respect in the workplace, working collaboratively in order to provide a safe, secure, healthy and inviting environment for all children and their families, building and maintaining healthy professional relationships that encourage growth and offering support and mentorship.

Our camp programs for JK and SK's will keep with our vision, to provide children and families with a seamless day from child care to the school day. At this particular age, children are looking for challenges and opportunities to help plan their activities all while building self-esteem and discovering their talents through social, emotional, physical and cognitive play. Our overriding goal is to support children through this discovery and provide environments that are safe, fun, hands-on and play-based.

How We Will Meet Our Goals

All staff, students and volunteers will read the Program Statement and sign off on all items in the Policy and Procedures Sign Off binder prior to employment or prior to interacting with children, and when the statement has been modified, and on an annual basis.

All staff, students, and volunteers will have a Vulnerable Sector Police Clearance, First Aid/CPR-C training, and a Negative TB test completed prior to employment or prior to interacting with children.

The Administrator or Supervisor will review all sign offs by staff, students and volunteers. The Administrator or Supervisor must be confident that the staff, volunteer or student is fully aware, and understands the Program statement and its implementation.

Each classroom will maintain logs on HiMama with observations, plans and documentation to support their understanding of the program statement. Copies of the documentation, relevant to their child, will be shared with all parents or guardians of the children in the program.

The Supervisor will meet on a regular basis with each team to establish a clear understanding of the program statement, to support staff in their delivery of the Program Statement and to aid the staff in self-reflection. The Supervisor will view each staff as competent and able, and give them time to be heard and respected, and to reflect on their own performance and their

contributions to the environment and the development of each child in their care. The Supervisor will use all observations, interactions and conversations to monitor all staff.

Staff will reflect on How Does Learning Happen?, by working through the reflection exercises in the document, by reviewing their observations and engaging children in meaningful activities, by maintaining communication with parents and building trusting relationships with the families, by working with their co-workers to create a safe and healthy environment and by taking the time to engage in self-reflection on a regular basis.

Bright Child Montessori wants to ensure that children have a safe and positive experience that promotes their growth as a learner. To this end, the Supervisor, along with the staff will reflect on each child's experiences logged on HiMama twice annually and provide a detailed report to families in the form of a report card. Furthermore, the supervisor will observe staff interactions with children on a regular basis ensuring that they align with our program statement and beliefs in adult-child interactions.

The following practices are **not** supported by our school:

- Locking the exits of our facility from the inside.
- Using a lock or lockable room or structure to confine a child that has been withdrawn from the group
- Abusing a child physically, verbally or emotionally
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding
- Using corporal punishment
- Using deliberate harsh or degrading measures that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect

In the event that the Administrator or Supervisor observes or is made aware of any practice that is not supported, they will address the issue with the staff member according to the strategies outlined in the Behaviour Management Policy.

Additionally, all Early Childhood Educators have made a commitment to abide by the standards of their profession as set out in the College of Early Childhood Educators Code of Ethics and Standards of practice. All Early Childhood Educators hold themselves accountable, and will use the Code of Ethics, the Standards of practice and the CCEYA to guide their decisions and practice.

You can share information with families from the Ministry of Education website, to support them in understanding how learning happens. How Does Learning Happen?, along with related videos, research, and much more, can be accessed at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/index.html