

## Child Care and Schools – Working Together in a Shared Space

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

### Ontario's Vision for the Early Years and Child Care

*All children and families have access to a range of high-quality; inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child and family centred and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being.*

The Ministry of Education supports an integrated early years and child care system in which school board and child care professionals work in partnership to provide seamless, high quality programs for children throughout the day. With the legislated requirement for schools to provide before- and after-school programs for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 where there is sufficient demand, there is an increased emphasis on the need for school principals, child care supervisors, recreation providers and staff to 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.

### Ontario's View of Children:



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

#### Opportunity for reflection:

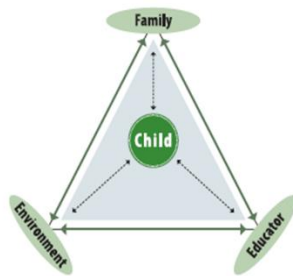
If we hold this view of children, **then** we respect their right to have access to the same materials and experiences to extend their thinking, learning and meaning-making throughout their day.

### How is the child's experience being considered?

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:

- Children are invited to share their thoughts about important considerations for shared space.
- Decisions about room/space selections and existing resources meet the needs of the children attending the before/after program. Whenever possible, the room chosen for before and after school programs should be used by the same age group during the school day. The purpose of this principle is to encourage a seamless day where children stay in the same classroom throughout their day. Therefore programs for 4 & 5 year olds, in particular, should be located in kindergarten classrooms.
- Strategies are developed collaboratively to share, prepare and care for the environment and materials so children can work on projects over an extended period of time.

- Shared expectations are discussed and reinforced (i.e., use of cubbies/materials) to promote inclusion and nurture a culture of shared rights, responsibilities and respect for the environment, belongings and each other throughout their day.
- Schedules are coordinated among professionals with the input of children and families for 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 the children and their families 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*

### Ontario's View of Families:



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 view of families, **then** we invite them to be a part of their child's learning and strive to create an environment that welcomes children, their families and their ideas, perspectives and contributions.

### How is the family's experience being considered?

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:

- Families 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 families.
- Intentional spaces are created for pedagogical documentation to invite families to reflect on experiences throughout the day and to make visible children's thinking, learning and relationships with their environment and the educators. Share spaces for pedagogical documentation in ways that invite families to contribute their ideas as partners in the learning process.
- A common philosophy is established to reinforce classrooms and schools as community space throughout the day where children and their families feel a strong sense of belonging.

## Ontario's View of 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.

### Opportunity for reflection:

If we hold this view 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."*

*Charles Pascal (2009)*

## How is the educator's experience being considered?

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:

- Kindergarten educators along with Before and After School educators invest in developing reciprocal relationships, and collaborating regarding conditions for working together 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.
- A shared space is created for accessing relevant research/documents for shared study and dialogue by all educators.
- Curriculum documents and relevant resources, e.g. *How Does Learning Happen?, Think, Feel, Act, Early Learning Framework, The Kindergarten Program (2016)* are shared and promoted across programs to build cohesion.
- Professional learning opportunities include educators from both programs whenever possible and, as appropriate, and involves the study of pedagogical documentation to better identify, understand and support children's learning strategies.
- Educators are welcomed to visit each other's programs in order to strengthen program alignment, relationships and to build a strong sense of well-being, belonging, engagement and expression for all professionals.

### Build and foster relationships through:

- Regular opportunities for staff from school and child care to get to know each other.
- Opportunities for secretarial, custodial and other staff to meet with the child care staff in an effort to build collective understanding of this shared culture. Regularly scheduled leadership meetings

throughout the year to support and nurture a shared culture as well as 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 case conferences or 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 partnership/relationship between child care and schools.
- Ensure exterior and interior signage is inclusive of school, child care and families.
- Develop a conflict management process that is clear to all staff sharing the space.
- Develop processes for communication with casual or supply educators to ensure understanding of transition procedures.
- Establish strategies to notify child care 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 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 and ensure that fire exits are mapped and posted and ensure fire plan updates include the child care program.
- Ensure, when possible, child care is notified in advance and that the child care 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.
- Develop inclement weather procedures, when children in the regular day program may need to enter the classroom earlier than scheduled.
- Discuss an approach to address health and safety issues (e.g., joint management of allergies, EPI-pen procedures, etc.) 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 educators and educator teams 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 and child and family support 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*** is a professional learning tool that includes information about the program, pedagogical approaches, and learning expectations which indicate the knowledge and skills children demonstrate as they progress through the 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.

For other relevant information and resources:

- ***Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education In Ontario, 2014***
- ***Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, 2017***
- ***The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014***
- ***Regulations under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*** includes licensing standards regarding 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 this regulation.
- ***Minister's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy*** sets out *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* as the document to be used for the purpose of guiding licensed child care programs.
- ***The Education Act and Ont. Regulation 221/11 Extended Day and Third Party Programs***
- ***Policies and Guidelines for School Boards: Before and After School Programs Kindergarten–Grade 6, 2017***