



WELLESLEY AND DISTRICT COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM STATEMENT

Welcome to the Wellesley Coop Preschool! Our program statement describes how our program supports and fosters early learning. It will outline the preschool's view of the child, its philosophy and pedagogy as well as its goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development.

It will also outline how we support the educators (the Registered Early Childhood Educators) who work with the children - and the parents who participate as teacher helpers and who are considered staff/ teachers.

The Preschool's program statement is reviewed annually to ensure it is aligned with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement and that it continues to reflect the values of the preschool. All educators, staff, students and volunteers shall review this statement prior to working at the preschool or whenever the program statement is modified.

The Preschool will ensure that all the approaches as stated in this program statement are implemented at the preschool by organizing an orientation meeting prior to the start of the preschool year, during which the educator delivers a short presentation of the expectations of the parents/staff. All members and staff, volunteers and students will sign off acknowledging the goals and approaches of the Program Statement. Once, during each preschool year, every educator, staff, volunteer or student will be observed as to their actions regarding the implementation of these approaches.

Philosophy - The study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

Pedagogy - The method and practice of teaching - how learning happens.

Educator - A registered early childhood educator.

Staff - In the cooperative preschool, a parent is considered as staff.

Orientation - Familiarization with something.

Our View of the Child

The Wellesley Coop Preschool believes that each child is an individual who is competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. The Preschool appreciates each child's uniqueness and recognizes the necessity to include all aspects or domains of development in order to understand the whole child. At the preschool we know that children learn through play, which is an activity of enjoyment! Children can be self-learners and do not require an adult to choose what or how they should learn. When a child's natural activity of play is supported by caring and responsive adults in positive learning environments, a child will flourish!

The Cooperative Aspect

The cooperative preschool was established to provide social opportunities for children as well as education for parents. In a cooperative, parents have the opportunity to become involved with their child's experiences. A lot of commitment and juggling is evident on the part of the parents as they work part-time, stay-at-home, are on maternity/paternity leave or try to balance a demanding career while devoting time to the co-op experience.

Wellesley Coop Preschool is a nonprofit, democratic organization where each family shares in the planning and operation of the school. The efforts of parents and their direct involvement make the preschool a unique educational endeavour.

For children, cooperatives provide the time, place and people to meet their need for love, understanding, relationships, responsibility, learning and creativity.

For parents, cooperatives provide support and a sense of belonging. It is a place where they can have the opportunity to observe their child and where they can both be learners and teachers. They can be genuinely involved with their child's education.

In this environment the educator also learns when sharing in the goal of providing what is best for the children. Our cooperative preschool believes that each child's family knows their child best, and the educator will work in partnership with families to ensure the best outcomes for all

Domains of Development - The categories which are used to manage the vast amount of information about human development. These include the areas of: motor/physical; cognitive; social/emotional; communication/language; self-help.

A Cooperative - An organization that is owned and run jointly by its members, involving mutual assistance in working toward a common goal: every member has clearly defined tasks in a cooperative enterprise, in which members share in the benefits of the organization.

Learning - The process of changing existing understanding to accommodate new ideas; acquiring new knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions; discovering through play.

Our Philosophy Regarding Play

Wellesley Coop Preschool values children learning through play and so play is the most important element in our program! Through play children learn what no one can teach them and are able to reach their full potential. They have the opportunity to develop skills such as independence, resourcefulness, curiosity, creativity, resiliency and responsibility. Play is a child's work! Children learn through their play, interests and meaningful interactions with others.

Play propels learning and development - they are intertwined; neither precedes the other. All domains of development are supported by play, which is self-initiated and therefore enjoyable. Play provides a way for children to be healthy in body and mind.

Play is physical and increases activity levels, fitness, balance, gross motor skills and fine motor skills.

Play is directly linked to the child's learning. A child's cognitive development and academic success is enhanced by the play experience.

Play is social and aids in language learning while supporting social skills development. Self-concepts and emotions are better understood through play. Important self-regulatory skills may be acquired and reinforced through play.

Play builds resilience and can help children manage stress. There are often therapeutic benefits to play. Typically children direct their play in ways that address their own socio-emotional issues through dramatic play.

Resiliency - The ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

Gross Motor Skills - Learned actions involving the large muscles of the body.
(eg. kicking a ball)

Fine Motor Skills - Learned actions involving the small muscles of the body.
(eg. cutting with scissors)

Self-Concept - An idea one has of oneself.

Self-Regulation - The conscious or unconscious control of your body, relationships and other aspects of yourself.

Dramatic Play - A chance to act out everyday skills and events in a play setting.

WELLESLEY COOP PRESCHOOL : **GOALS AND APPROACHES**

1. To promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children:

Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the Wellesley Coop Preschool and we understand that the well-being of their child is a parent's #1 concern.

Ways in which the Preschool fosters health and well-being:

- *providing healthy snacks which contain items from two of the four food groups and letting the child decide how much and what they will eat.

- *providing opportunities and the time to practise self-help and self-care skills based on each child's capabilities. (at snack, in the washroom and while dressing)

- *providing daily opportunities for children to be physically active (either indoors or outdoors) and to explore the world around them with their bodies, minds and senses.

- *recognizing children's efforts to take reasonable risks and letting them test their limits in order to gain increasing competence and a sense of mastery through active play and social interactions.

- *reaching out to all families, including those who may be experiencing stressful and challenging circumstances, and helping them to make connections to formal supports (community agencies) and informal supports (connections with other families)

- *participating in professional learning to ensure the program fosters social and emotional well-being and resilience for children and families.

Goal - An aim or desired result.

Approach - A way of dealing with something

Sensory Exploration - The process of discovering, acquiring and interpreting sensory information.

Family - A number of people who decide to live together or who are bonded by birth-ties, who share a home and who share common values and similar life-styles; adults taking on a parental role, and one or more children living and functioning as a unit.

2. To support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff:

Wellesley Coop Preschool understands that young children flourish in all areas of development when they are in positive and responsive relationships with adults. Educators and teachers build a foundation of trust with children by being available, sensitive, responsive, caring and genuine.

The Preschool creates an inclusive and respectful environment to foster positive and fair relationships by making children feel safe, secure, valued and that they are a contributing member of their world. This is done by interacting with children at their own level and by allowing children to bring toys/items from home. When this occurs, children are able to explore, discover, try new things, grow, learn and develop.

To support your child's care, growth and development, the educator at the preschool interacts and communicates with parents on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations and reflections through regular conversations and emails. The Preschool also maintains an open door policy.

Responsive Caregiving - The process of offering consistent, reliable care by the careful observation of cues.

Documentation - A collage/display of material that provides information or evidence or that serves as a record of observation, analysis and reflection.

3. To encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate:

Wellesley Coop Preschool believes that it is the role of the adult in a child's life to support them in learning how to interact effectively with the world around them including other children, adults and the environment.

Some of the approaches which should be used by educators and teachers include:

- *role modelling inclusive, respectful and collaborative interactions with children and other adults.

- *re-directing and guiding children into acceptable options when engaged in an unacceptable activity

- *striving to make children aware of the results of their own actions.

- *ensuring the learning environment is flexible in order to respond in the moment and build on the children's interests.

- *ensuring toys, equipment and materials are plentiful and available to children at most times

- *giving children the freedom to make choices.

- *engaging as a play partner and therefore being able to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion and problem solving when conflict arises and understanding how their actions affect others.

- *providing small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention

- *having educators attend trainings that address self-regulation and resilience.

Role Modelling - Demonstrating appropriate behaviour that can be seen by the children so that they can observe and internalize what they see; showing how a particular role is conducted.

Collaborative - Produced or conducted by two or more parties working together:

Pro-social - Learned behaviour that is positive, helpful, and intended to promote empathy and consideration to another person.

4. To foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry:

Children learn best when fully engaged. This happens in play that comes from a child's natural sense of curiosity and wonder. As parents and educators, we watch children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions, testing theories, solving problems and pretending. When children do this, they are putting together all the pieces of how the world works. The Preschool program provides environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative and meaningful exploration, play and inquiry by:

- *creating opportunities that spark curiosity, invite investigation and provide challenges which help children push the boundaries of their learning

- *connecting with families and the community and inviting their participation to ensure that the preschool reflects and is relevant to the children's everyday lives. (field trips, visitors)

- *providing a variety of interesting objects and open-ended materials for children to manipulate and investigate.

- *planning the morning routine with as few as possible interruptions and transitions and providing large amounts of time for the preschool children to engage in sustained, complex play and inquiry.

- * participating with the children as a co-investigator, co-learner and co-planner.

- *questioning and testing their thoughts and ideas and their understanding of the world around them in meaningful ways.

- *working with families and community partners to provide equal learning experiences for all children. (this may include a resource teacher)

- *ensuring that opportunities provided promote play and inquiry that will help children discover and develop an increasing awareness and understanding of key concepts, including those associated with literacy and numeracy development.

- *documenting and making children's learning, thinking and competence visible to children, families and others.

At Wellesley Coop Preschool, children decide where, when, what and how they wish to play. Their decisions are based on their interests and curiosity. The educator responds by adapting the environment by adding new toys, materials and equipment, posing questions and being a play partner. The teachers role is to support play so that learning and development flourishes.

Engagement - A state of being genuinely involved and interested in what one is doing.

Inquiry - The act of asking questions in order to gather information.

Sensory Exploration - The process of discovering, acquiring and interpreting sensory information.

Play Partner - One or more individuals playing together with a shared interest; in the case of adult-child play partnership, the adult allows the child to take the lead.

5. To provide child-initiated and adult supported experiences:

At the Wellesley Preschool, the focus is NOT on teaching a body of knowledge or a predetermined set of topics. Learning is focused on supporting the development of strategies and skills for lifelong learning through play and inquiry.

Educators engage with, observe and listen to the children. They hear the suggestions made by the children and respond by discussing with the children, their families and caregivers, the possibilities for children's further exploration in more complex ways. Educators and staff can then, in turn, provide more suggestions, ideas and materials to the children and therefore all are co-learners, constructing knowledge together.

Curiosity - Mental interest that leads to behaviours of discovery and learning.

Strategy - A plan or method of achieving a goal.

Skill - A learned behaviour.

Observation - The action or process of watching something or someone carefully in order to gain information.

6. To plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported:

The Wellesley Coop Preschool understands that the parent is the child's first teacher, the preschool teachers are second and that the third teacher is the environment.

The Preschool follows the "How Does Learning Happen" document which is organized around four foundations - four conditions that are important for children to grow and flourish and which children should experience each and every day. These are belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.

The Preschool provides learning centres - specially prepared places where materials are provided to respond to children's interests or to trigger new ones. It also provides soft furnishings, quiet areas and accessories that are intended to make the children feel comfortable and safe.

The Preschool sees the child as a whole child - with all of the developmental domains interacting. The educator understands that building in the block room involves gross motor and fine motor skills but that the play that children engage in while building involves many more - like communication and social skills.

Therefore, you may find books, as well as pencils and paper in the kitchen area, because the children might be using these items to write orders for a restaurant or be reading a menu to make cookies!

Environment - Aspects of the immediate surroundings or conditions in which a person operates. The presence or absence of objects, furniture, light, colour, toys and play things and the inclusion/exclusion of indoor and outdoor space.

Belonging - A sense of connectedness to others - of being valued and of forming relationships with others as well as making contributions.

Well-Being - The state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

Engagement - A state of being genuinely involved and interested in what one is doing.

Expression - Communication which is to be heard as well as listened to.

7. To 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 care:

The Wellesley Coop Preschool's daily schedule has been designed to meet the needs of the children and provides for a balance of activities throughout the morning.

The daily schedule is not rigid and operating in small groups occurs - e.g.. one small group of children might make play dough for the class, while another small group of children is planning and building in the block room.

Periods of active and quiet play are interwoven throughout the morning both indoors and outdoors.

At Wellesley Preschool, we like to go outside in all kinds of weather! The children love to bundle up in warm clothes and head out to jump in puddles or make snowballs. However, in very poor or cold weather active play takes place upstairs so that the children get the physical activity their bodies require.

Transitions from one activity to another is kept to a minimum so children get to play more.

However, young children thrive on regular schedules and feel secure when they can predict what will occur throughout the morning. Therefore the general sequence of the preschool morning is kept the same.

Schedule - A plan for carrying out a process or procedure, giving lists of intended events.

Transitions - Aspects of the planned and unplanned day that create changes from one type of activity to another.

8. To foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children:

Wellesley Coop Preschool understands that a parent is the most important person in a child's life. Educators and parents communicate on a daily basis about the child's activities and health.

The Preschool informs and includes families in what and how their children are learning and developing by several ways:

- *daily highlights of each morning which include observations of children's interests and also activities introduced by the educator

- *pictures sent by email documenting the connections to learning

- *anecdotes sent by email as well as being put into children's portfolios

- *progress reports in January and parent/educator interviews upon request

- *celebrations, field trips and special events

- *displays of children's artwork and creations

- *family posters and a turn to be the Star of the Week

9. To involve local community partners and to allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff:

The Wellesley Coop Preschool views the community as a valuable resource and plans learning opportunities involving the community into its program. (visitors and field trips)

The preschool also works closely with community agencies and partners in order to support the children and their families. (KidsAbility, KWHab etc.)

Communication - The two way process of sending and receiving information to reach a shared understanding.

Portfolio - A set of pieces of creative work and/or various photographs collected by someone to display their skills.

10. To support educators and the staff in their continuous professional learning:

The Wellesley Coop Preschool is committed to the ongoing professional development of its educator. What the educator learns guides best practices which is then passed onto the children.

The Preschool provides opportunities for the educator to attend learning workshops and conferences.

The Preschool also provides legislated training requirements such as Standard First Aid and Infant and Child CPR to all staff and educators.

On a day to day basis, the Preschool educator is responsible for the leadership, mentorship, coaching and development of the staff. The educator helps staff to be more effective in assisting the educator while in the classroom, by sharing materials including links, articles and various readings.

Best Practice - Professional procedures that are accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective.

Mentorship - The guidance provided by a mentor, especially an experienced person in a company or educational institution.

11. To document and review the impact of the strategies set out in goals #1 - 10 on the children and their families:

The Wellesley Coop Preschool educator reflects in a continuous cycle of observation:

- documenting play and its significance
- determining the children's interests
- planning activities that support the interests
- reflection that informs the planning of activities and the environment

This cycle will be reflected in the toys, materials and equipment provided in the play area, the creative work of the children, the activities the children are engaging in, the daily highlights posted daily for parents to read and discuss, in photos and written descriptions of activities and in monthly newsletters.

This continuous cycle is called reflective practice. On a daily basis, the educator is observing and engaging with the children, evaluating the effectiveness of the learning environment to build on the children's interests. Weekly the educator is reviewing planning and ensuring they are supporting children's learning and development. Monthly, the educator reflects back on what did and didn't work and then plans for the future.

The Preschool values reflective practice and therefore it engages in regular reviews with consideration given to the input of the members of the preschool through parent surveys.

Planning - The act of preparing and designing experiences and activities.

Reflective Practice - The capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

Parent Survey - Questions to investigate the opinions and experiences of the parents of the children.

Minister of Education's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/programCCEYA.pdf>

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

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/>