



Program Statement 2016

The YWCA is committed to supporting children's learning, development, health and well-being through caring and responsive educators and staff who focus on active learning, exploration, play and inquiry, and who see children and the families as competent and able, and as an active participant in all aspects of the program.

Guided by the Ministry of Education and the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, the YWCA is dedicated to ensuring high quality experiences for our participants and families. The CCEYA authorizes the Minister of Education to issue policy statements regarding programming and pedagogy for the purpose of guiding operators of child care and early year's programs. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)* is the document that guides our child care policies and practices. This document is organized around four foundations that are considered essential to optimal learning and healthy development for children. They are: Belonging, Well-being, Engagement, and Expression.

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, 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.

The four foundations apply regardless of the child's age, ability, culture, language, geography, or setting. Unlike a structured curriculum, the conditions are high states of being that children naturally seek for themselves and should not be viewed as separate elements.

Health & Wellness

All staff will promote and maintain the mental & physical health, safety, nutrition and well-being of each child. Educators will foster the connection between cognition and physical and emotional well-being. Staff will foster a child's sense of self, self-care, and self-regulation.

Approach: Staff will provide a clean and safe environment, offer a balanced variety of food choices daily based on the Canada's Food Guide, have access to drinking water throughout the day, and reduce hazards that may cause injury. Community supports and resources will be brought in to assist the families and Educators who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

Professional Development & Continuous Learning

Our goal is to provide continuous professional learning and growth opportunities to enhance the knowledge of our educators. The YWCA Management team will guide our Educators as lifelong learners.

Approach: All Educators will participate in professional development training workshops, and be encouraged to attend additional PD opportunities offered through community agencies. The YWCA will ensure that our written policies and procedures with respect to educator training and professional development reflect continuous professional learning.

Play & Environment

Play and program activities will reflect the unique interests of the children with adult supported experiences to enhance growth, because we believe children are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. Educators will play an important role in children's exploration, play and inquiry and observation and documentation will support Educators in designing inquiry based play. The classroom environment is the 'third teacher' for our children and this environment can be created and adapted to meet the individual needs of all children. Environments that encourage positive interactions and self-regulation will be utilized in our childcare spaces. All children will be treated with respect, in ways that enhance their well-being, individuality, self-worth and self-esteem.

Approach: Educators will support children's development of self-regulation by learning and being responsive to a child's unique cue, arousal state and response to specific stressors. These are documented and shared with Educators to build a cooperative and consistent approach to developing self-regulation. Staff will build relationships with children through role modelling, demonstrations, asking questions and providing choices. Active and passive play, rest and quiet time, will be offered on a daily basis. Children will gain independence and practice self-control while developing a sense of mastery and physical competence when engaging in various types of play. Educators will provide open-ended physical activity experiences, cooperative games and a variety of recreation and sports equipment.

Educators will provide environments that reduce stress and increase the ability of children to self-regulate. Space, lighting, noise, equipment and layout are taken into consideration when utilizing the environment. The program environment offers open ended play opportunities that provide children with musical, dramatic, science, technology, and construction experiences.

Communication & Building Relationships

We believe that positive responsive interactions are built through a sense of belonging among the children and parents within our programs. Families are the children's first teachers, and they have unique knowledge, expertise and know the strengths of their child. We strive to constantly seek new information from parents about their children, and we want to create an environment of open and active communication between, parents, educators and administrators. We will engage with families, and value their strengths, contributions and unique perspectives by building positive and responsive relationships.

Approach: Educators will respond positively to children's cues and support the development of secure relationships by building strong connections with the children to enable them to feel safe and have the confidence to play, explore, and learn about the world around them. Educators will role model and assist children in expressing their feelings, recognize others' feelings, and help others, and encourage and support children to take risks, try new things and explore with safe environments. Families will be invited to participate in their children's learning experiences on a regular basis to foster relationships between staff and families. We will ask parents questions and invite them to collaborate on problem solving and identify their child's strengths. We will reach out to families and share information through emails, social media, phone calls, text, the website and newsletters. We will invite and solicit feedback from families in regards to programming, staffing and other childcare related activities. Children and parents will have access to photo documentation to review photos and have conversations about belonging, engagement, well-being and expression. We will showcase documentation via photographs, postings and narratives. We will place this near the entrance where families can find out more about their children's experiences.

Documentation & Continual Improvement

Our Program Statement guides our work and challenges us to continually improve quality.

Approach: The YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin is committed to ongoing reflection of the Program Statement and will revise, edit, document and add to ensure we achieve the greatest outcome for children and families. We understand that children are capable and curious learners, and that educators and families are co-learners cultivating opportunities through reflection and collaboration to enhance children's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. Regular site visits will ensure quality programming, and to ensure we continue to make program improvements.

References

[How Does Learning Happen? - Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014](#)