

# PLASP Program Statement 2023

PLASP Child Care Services offers a learning program that is consistent with Ministry of Education policies, pedagogy and curriculum. Some of the Ministry documents we reference in our program include the following:

- [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)
- [Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework](#)
- [Think Feel Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children](#)
- [Early Learning for Every Child Today](#)

PLASP also uses a HighScope approach in its Early Learning and Child Care Centres. HighScope emphasizes active learning. Since we know that children learn best by pursuing their personal interests and goals, children make their own choices about materials and activities during the program time. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with peers, program staff, volunteers, students on placement and adults.

## **Children are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential**

PLASP recognizes each child is a unique individual who brings his or her own abilities to the program and deserves the encouragement and space to try new things, explore new ideas and develop their own unique creativity.

We provide an environment that fosters curiosity, one that allows children to explore. We believe that every child deserves a safe and caring environment (a place where children want to be and where they feel “at home”), in which to grow and develop to their maximum potential.

We understand the importance of taking children's stages of development into consideration. For each child, their stage of development is an individualized and

complex interplay between developmental factors and their unique family, community and life experiences. In each case, we aim to integrate all areas of the child's development into our program in a holistic way.

Our goals for children, consistent with the Ministry of Education pedagogy, include the following:

- Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she are 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.

Children's interests are valuable to their learning and offer a rich variety of experiences.

The type of activities we offer include:

- sensory/art including drama, music, dance and visual arts
- language and listening
- science and cognitive/manipulative
- construction and block design
- daily opportunities for physical activity and active outdoor play
- opportunities for school-age children to work on their homework
- rest time for children who require it, based on their developmental needs
- opportunities for children to develop social skills and relationships

Our programs are designed to:

- encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate
- foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry
- provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences
- offer opportunities to create authentic lasting relationships with others in the program

## Health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children

We know that the early years set the foundation for children's health and well-being.

- The brain's architecture is shaped by a child's interactions and relationships with parents and other significant people in their lives.
- Early brain development is stimulated through experiences and interactions with responsive adults.

We understand that the first step in establishing and nurturing health, safety and well-being for children in our programs is through the connections they make with the program staff, volunteers and students on placements. Here are some other specific ways we promote well-being in our programs.

**Health and safety**—as a licensed child care operator, PLASP is assessed on all health and safety requirements of the Ministry of Education and local government bylaws. Information is posted outside our program rooms on our “Parent Communication” boards and others (for example the Anaphylaxis Policy) are provided in the Parent Handbook. You can also speak to our program staff at any time to view our complete health and safety policies and protocols.

**Nutrition**—PLASP collaborates with a registered dietician to develop standard menus for all of our programs that are both nutritious and appealing for children. Our menus follow Canada's Food Guide and are culturally sensitive. You can view the menu on the Parent Communication board and on our website. We accommodate dietary or religious food requirements for children in our programs.

## Relationships among children, families, staff and community partners

It is one of our core values at PLASP to foster collaborative and co-operative relationships among all of our partners.

PLASP strives to promote a sense of belonging for children and their families in our programs by creating positive interactions and collaboration with families. We understand that relationships of trust are the basis for learning and co-operation. Every child is entitled to be given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility and social skills, to learn to problem-solve and to learn about diversity and inclusion.

The skills of conflict resolution are important to lifelong learning. As competent individuals, children are active participants in resolving conflicts. We encourage them to come up with ideas and solutions to problems that arise.

PLASP is committed to working collaboratively with all of our community partners as we work together on the mutual goal of providing the best possible early learning and child care programs to families. Community partners visit our programs and provide feedback and recommendations for program quality. In addition, our partners are involved in the consultation and development of individual plans for children where appropriate. We work with our community partners to support the needs of every child.

## **Positive self-expression, communication and self-regulation**

At PLASP, our inclusive programming leads to children's sense of belonging. Positive learning environments and experiences, focused on active play-based learning, encourage children's communication, self-expression and self-regulation.

We seek to be aware of, foster, support, encourage, respond to and document the many ways in which children express themselves, the many "voices" with which they articulate their ideas, the variety of "languages" they use to communicate. We also seek to honour and reflect children's home language and culture in our programs.

In our inclusive learning environments, we welcome children of all abilities. Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion is vital for optimal development and learning. Here are some of the ways in which we create an inclusive environment in our programs:

- Recognize each child as having equal rights to participate in program activities, trips and events.
- Recognize and respect the unique qualities of each child and family, including ancestry, culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, family environment, and developmental abilities and needs.
- Create strategies that value the culture and first language of all children.
- Establish programming strategies to foster an inclusive learning environment in which every child can participate.
- View the diversity of children and families as an asset, and plan programs to reflect differences and enrich the environment.

Our programs focus on active play-based learning as the way that children naturally learn best. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are 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 opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. Play is responsive to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on his or her innate curiosity and creativity.

Our program also supports children's self-regulation, their ability to deal with stress and remain calm, alert and ready to learn. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to modulate their emotions, pay attention, ignore distractions, inhibit their impulses and understand the consequences of their actions. We 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.

## **Parent engagement and communication**

PLASP aims to foster outreach, engagement and communication with families about our program and their children's learning experiences. We believe that families are experts on their children. Sharing knowledge is integral to the success of your child. The PLASP website at [www.plasp.com](http://www.plasp.com) provides ongoing parent information.

PLASP aims to ensure that families have the support of available, affordable, safe, reliable, high quality licensed early learning and child care for their children, which ensures parents peace of mind while their children are in the PLASP program. Respect, care, empathy, trust and integrity are core values in all our interactions with families. We know that our partnerships with our families help our program to best meet the needs of the children:

Families form the foundation for a child's early development. Families know their children best and are the first and most powerful influence on learning and development.

- The needs of each child are considered in the context of their family composition, values, culture, and language. This approach enriches relationships between early childhood settings, families, and their communities.
- We involve parents and other important adults in various events and activities at our programs. This connects them to their children's early development and enhances the child's learning.

In addition to the ongoing interaction with PLASP program staff, we offer many opportunities for formal and informal parent feedback and involvement—such as surveys, focus groups and communication with the head office administrative staff. We use parent input to improve our programs and services. At any time throughout the year, parents are welcome to contact the PLASP administrative staff at the head office to provide feedback and express any concerns they may have about the program. Parents are provided information and support responsive to their needs. Calls are logged and where needed, will be referred to the Area Manager, who will respond.

Area Managers visit programs regularly, looking for key indicators to determine program success. Parent surveys are conducted annually. The results provide PLASP with

information on families' level of satisfaction in all areas of the program, their experience with PLASP and suggestions for improvement.

## **Community partners**

PLASP is committed to involving local community partners and to engaging those partners in supporting PLASP children, families and staff.

We provide learning opportunities and practical work experience, in the areas of programming and administration, to members of the community through the recruitment, placement, training and recognition of volunteers and students on placement.

Volunteers and students on placement augment the high-quality care and individual attention given to the children in the programs.

We also have hundreds of community partners—individuals, organizations and agencies who support PLASP children and families financially or through in-kind support. We collaborate with these partners and continue to create more opportunities to expand these relationships on behalf of our children and families. We celebrate and recognize our partners at our Annual Parent and Community Meeting every October.

## **Supporting staff in continuous professional learning**

PLASP is committed to hiring, training and fairly compensating staff. We hire staff who have a positive and sensitive attitude towards children. Our non-discriminatory hiring practices provide individuals of all backgrounds the opportunity for employment. We believe that everyone has worth and value, and all staff are entitled to be respected, supported and treated fairly.

PLASP staff foster children's inquiry and creativity. Staff plan on a daily basis based on the observations that they make on children's interests. In this way, learning is extended, leading to deeper investigation with materials and the environment. Staff plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.



Through positive adult-child interactions, PLASP staff work closely with children to extend their learning by encouraging children to build upon their existing knowledge. PLASP staff develop an intentionally planned program that supports early learning.

At PLASP, we believe that knowledgeable and responsive early educators:

- Recognize that responding to the unique abilities, needs, and characteristics of each child, family, and community is central to supporting learning and development.
- Engage with children as co-learners as they explore their environments.
- Provoke children's thinking, create meaningful programs, and guide interactions with children and their families.
- Use a warm and positive approach to support children's developing ability to express emotions and take other perspectives.
- Know when to stand back and observe and when to enter children's play to stimulate thinking.
- Make a commitment to build self-awareness, regularly reflect on practices and engage in new learning experiences, both individually and with colleagues.

Staff working in our centres and kindergarten programs have completed studies in the field of early childhood education and are registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. All Program staff working in our School Age Programs have completed a specific training program designed by PLASP. Many have additional credentials in early childhood education, child and youth care or recreation and leisure. All program staff attend regular mandatory professional learning meetings. Professional development opportunities are available to staff, on an ongoing basis, throughout the year. Each year, a variety of workshops and courses are offered to all PLASP staff.

In addition, the Sylvia Leal Leadership Award recognizes an individual, Program or Head Office staff, who demonstrates exceptional leadership in supporting PLASP communities, families and children, colleagues and partners to achieve outstanding results. The recipient receives a one-time grant of \$1,000 towards their professional or personal development and a one-time monetary award of \$500 towards their team's development and/or program's enrichment.

Formal professional learning is vital, but we also know that the most central professional growth happens day-to-day, as our staff co-learn with children and each other as self-reflective professionals.

## **Documenting and reviewing the impact of PLASP learning program**

At PLASP, we understand that pedagogical documentation is a way for our program staff to learn about how children think and learn.

Our staff make daily observations of children in the program and use this information to inform their future planning. Our intention is to move beyond reporting of children's behaviour, in order to find meaning in what children do and experience. The purpose of our documentation is also:

- A way to value children's experiences and help them to reflect back on those experiences and what they have been learning
- An opportunity to make children's learning and understanding of the world visible—to themselves, to other children, to their parents and other families, to the program staff
- A way to reflect on developmental growth over a period of time
- A process for program staff to co-plan with children about learning
- A dialogue with families about children's experience and an invitation for parents to add their own documentation about their children's learning
- A self-reflection opportunity for program staff, as they participate in continuous professional learning

PLASP staff will complete the process of pedagogical documentation in the interest of gaining better understanding of the children and families in their care. Through pedagogical documentation PLASP staff will endeavor to:

- Make children's learning visible;
- Understand what children are thinking through the course of their experiences;
- Explore how children learn and what they are passionate about;
- Capture how children's learning and their understanding and experiences change over time.

During regular visits, Area Managers mentor, support and provide reflective observations to staff, ensuring that the approaches outlined in the program statement, as well as compliance with policies and procedures, are being implemented. Program and personal goals for program staff are set annually to reflect continuous learning and growth. PLASP is committed to providing high quality early learning and child care to all our children and families which is why it is important for PLASP to better understand the impact of PLASP Programs on children and their families. Each year, parents are invited to provide feedback by answering an extensive survey. Survey feedback is reviewed by PLASP management and shared with program staff. This information is used to set goals for each program, which are reviewed annually with location staff. The level of overall parent satisfaction is posted annually in each program.

The program statement and various policies are reviewed with all staff, students on placement and volunteers prior to commencing work with the children and annually thereafter.