



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026



Early Learning Program

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Introduction

Please note that the Early Learning Department at the OCDSB is enrolled in the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care System (CWELCC) and we are a licensed child care program under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

The OCDSB is grateful to be present on this land, the traditional unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe People. The OCDSB is committed to First Nations, Métis and Inuit rights, human rights and equity. The Board recognizes its responsibility to ensure that our policy and associated procedures promote and protect First Nations, Métis and Inuit rights, human rights, and equity and strive to address and eliminate racism and structural and systemic barriers for children, students, staff, caregivers and the community.

A warm welcome is extended to you and your family.

As a licensed child care program in Ontario, we adhere to the Ministry of Education's policy statement on programming and pedagogy, [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years \(HDL\)](#). This is based upon four pillars to build on as a child continues in our care: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement and Expression. Throughout this journey, we view all children, families and educators as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential.



Setting out and acting on a strong belief in children, we foster their exploration, play and inquiry by providing materials based on the children's observed interests and questions. We encourage the children to use materials in a variety of ways to promote creativity, imagination and implement play-based/inquiry-based learning opportunities with educators as

co-learners. We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences by following the lead of the children, and providing related resources to enhance the learning experiences. We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported by meeting within teams to share observations, discuss, collaborate, and plan for a child's developing skills and abilities. We provide equipment and materials that are appropriate for the whole group of children as well as documenting and evaluating activities within a team to ensure the learning objectives are achieved. The program incorporates indoor and outdoor play, active play, and rest/quiet time into the day that gives consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving care by providing a schedule of daily activities that is flexible and allows for extensions of activities as well as a variety of activity choices.

We foster the engagement of ongoing communication with parents regarding the program and their children by welcoming parents into our program, encouraging them to ask questions and share information about their child. We make children's learning visible by displaying documentation about the children and the program. We involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff by providing parents with the resources needed to involve appropriate agencies to engage with their child. Engaging in activities in the local community as well as the school environment enhances our community of learning.

Program Statement

Vision Statement:

To be leaders in the field of Early Learning, ensuring that every child, family, caregiver and educator has access to caring, innovative and socially responsible OCDSB early years environments; and

Mission Statement:

To support a culture of lifelong learning, in collaboration with school and community partners, through safe, inclusive, diverse, and evolving early years programs that foster the unique potential of every child and their caring adults.

As an OCDSB licensed Early Learning Centre in Ontario, we adhere to the Ministry of Education's policy statement on programming and pedagogy (*How Does Learning Happen?*). This is based upon four pillars to build on as a child continues in our care: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement and Expression. Throughout this journey, we view all children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential.

We promote the health, safety and well-being of children by:

- Providing daily snacks and lunch;
- Providing opportunities for active and quiet activities, both indoors and outdoors;
- Ensuring children are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear during outdoor play;
- Practising fire drills and other school safety procedures (Lock Down, Secure School);
- Ensuring all staff are current in their First Aid and CPR Training; and
- Providing opportunities for children to engage in and explore their world according to their interests, putting their needs first.

We encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate by:

- Providing a welcoming, respectful environment for all members of a family, encouraging consistency between home and ELC.

- Providing opportunities for open communication with parents at drop-off and pick-up times.
- Facilitating group play opportunities to encourage positive interactions between peers;
- Providing developmentally appropriate activities to encourage children's engagement;
- Acknowledging children's thoughts and feelings with empathy;
- Encouraging developmentally appropriate language (verbal and non-verbal) to communicate feelings, and modeling appropriate responses and behaviours; and
- Implementing prevention strategies as a team for undesired behaviours.
- We foster children's exploration, play and inquiry by:
 - Providing materials based on children's observed interests and questions;
 - Using materials in a variety of ways to promote creativity and use of imagination; and
 - Implementing play-based/inquiry-based learning opportunities with educators as co-learners.

We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences by:

- Following the lead of the children, and providing related resources to enhance the learning experiences; and
- Implementing and expanding upon open-ended experiences through inquiry and diverse materials.

We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported by:

- Encouraging teams to share observations, discuss, collaborate, and plan for the children's developing skills and abilities; and
- Providing equipment and materials that are appropriate for the whole group of children.

We incorporate indoor, outdoor, active and quiet play, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving care by:

- Having a posted schedule of daily activities that is flexible, and allows for extensions of activities as well as a variety of activity choices; and
- Modifying an activity or transition to address the needs of the group or the individual child.

We foster engagement of, and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children by:

- Encouraging parents to ask questions and share information about their child; and
- Displaying documentation about their child and the program.

We involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff by:

- Helping to provide parents with the resources needed to involve appropriate agencies to engage with their child; and
- Engaging in activities in the local community as well as the school environment.

We support staff in relation to Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) by:

- Providing current updated information on Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) from the College of Early Childhood Educators, and *How Does Learning Happen?* Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years resources from the Ministry of Education;
- Providing information on professional development opportunities from federal, provincial and local childcare and Early Years organisations; and
- Encouraging peer coaching.

We will document and review the impact of the above strategies on children and families by:

- Reviewing the program statement and the strategies identified to ensure accuracy;
- Encouraging documentation and displaying evidence of children's learning opportunities through photographs and written text; and
- Involving staff in determining PD topics/areas of interest specific to program statement goals.

Expectations for implementation of the approach to the OCDSB Program Statement:

The following practices are in place to ensure that only preferred practices are used in regards to the implementation of the Program Statement:

- Prior to working with the children, the Program Coordinator will discuss the centre's Program Statement, and prohibited practices with each staff, student and volunteer to ensure compliance, as required by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA);
- Monitoring practices by ongoing observations;
- Team meetings will include discussion about implementing approaches specified in the program statement, as well as prohibited practices and interventions;
- A daily log will be kept for staff to record in. The following information will be documented: anecdotal record of intervention, children involved, location, time, duration and techniques used by the child and educator. The Program Coordinator will review the documentation as needed; and
- The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Team Manager, will do staff performance appraisals.

Who Can Register in the OCDSB ELC?

The program is open to all children from 18 months of age to 4 years of age. Due to legislation, we cannot accept any requests for exceptions to the age requirements.

Early Learning Centre Program Staff

"When we see educators as knowledgeable, reflective, resourceful, and rich in experience, we value the experiences and environments they create for children." (HDLH)

Our educator teams are composed of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and Program Assistants. To support educator teams applying pedagogical approaches and practices as well as policies and procedures, our Program



Coordinators work alongside the educators to both guide and support them to deliver a responsive and quality program. The General Manager and the Team Manager oversee the operation of the OCDSB's Early Learning Centres.

The educator teams and management team foster interactions and communication among educators, children and families. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to communicate with all OCDSB program staff.

Criminal Reference Check — Vulnerable Sector Checks

To mitigate risk to the safety of the children or anyone else who works in the program, all of our Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and Program Assistants as well as the Early Learning Department Team must provide a current Police Record - Vulnerable Sector check prior to beginning employment. All OCDSB employees will complete an annual offence declaration. All requirements for Vulnerable Sector checks are set out by the Ministry of Education and the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

Hours of Operation

OCDSB Early Learning Centres operate Monday to Friday on a twelve month basis.

Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Closure Dates

Statutory Holidays

We will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Easter Monday
- August Civic Holiday
- Family Day
- Victoria Day
- Labour Day
- Good Friday
- Canada Day
- Thanksgiving



In addition to the above mentioned holidays, all OCDSB Early Learning Centre locations are closed the week between Christmas and New Year's.

Application Process

Apply for a Childcare Space: Parents/guardians must apply for a childcare space using the [City of Ottawa's online Child Care Registry and Waiting List \(CCRAW\)](#).

The City has developed an application guide on their website to assist you.

Receive an Admission Offer: Once a space becomes available, an admission offer will be sent to parents/guardians via email.

Activate Your Account: If an activation code is required, it will be emailed separately. Use this code to activate your account on the ELC Parent Portal. The link to the portal is on the [OCDSB Early Learning Centres webpage](#).



Complete E-Registration: Log in to the ELC portal to complete the e-registration process. You will be asked to fill in all required information, including confirming that you have read and will comply with the policy and procedures in the handbook. It is important to remember your user ID, password, and security question answers for future use.

Confirm Registration: You will receive an automated email confirming that the child's profile has been created and your registration is complete.

Troubleshooting: If at any time you are encountering difficulties with the application process, registration process or accessing the ELC parent portal, you can contact the technical support team by using the online chat feature or by email at support@digibot.ca. If you receive a service error when trying to register your child for the ELC program, please ensure you are using a personal computer, not a work or corporate VPN. Please also note that the Digibot platform is only accessible within Canada.

Waitlist Policy and Procedure

General

- OCDSB Early Learning Centres will strive to accommodate all applications.
- Where the maximum capacity of a program has been reached and spaces are unavailable for new children to be enrolled, the waiting list procedures set out below will be followed.
- No fee will be charged to parents/guardians for placing a child on the waiting list.
- Applications will be carried over to the next school year if not admitted during the requested school year.

- Every reasonable effort is made to give priority to the younger siblings of actively (re)registered ELC children.
- Every reasonable effort is made to give priority to actively (re)registered ELC children who transfer from one OCDSB location to another.

Offering an Available Space

Parents/caregivers of children on the waiting list will be notified via Digibot that a space has become available in their requested program. A tour of the centre will be arranged with the Program Coordinator.

Responding to Parents/Guardians who inquire about their Child's Placement on the Waiting List

1. The Program Coordinator will be the contact person for parents/guardians who wish to inquire about the status of their child's place on the waiting list.
2. The Program Coordinator will respond to parent/guardian inquiries and provide the child's current position on the list and an estimated likelihood of the child being offered a space in the program.

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

1. The waiting list will be maintained in a manner that protects the privacy and confidentiality of the children and families on the list and therefore the child's position on the waiting list will only be provided to their parents/guardians.
2. Names of other children or families and/or their placement on the waiting list will not be shared with other individuals.

Privacy Policy

In accordance with the [OCDSB Privacy Policy](#), the Early Learning Department will abide by all OCDSB privacy policies and procedures when it comes to the release of information pertaining to any child applying to, or registered in, the Early Learning Centre.

Registration Details

Release of Information

Only the client account holder in the ELC parent portal will have access to attendance and any other information as it relates to the child/ren's Early Learning Centre enrollment. The account holder is able to add additional contacts to the account if they wish those contacts to receive email correspondence through the ELC portal from the Early Learning Department.

Access to all financial information is restricted to the client account holder only and no financial details will be discussed with any other party without the consent of the account holder.

Schedules of Attendance

The OCDSB Early Learning Centre offers Monday to Friday full-day care.

Withdrawals (Complete Withdrawal from the ELC)

In order to request a withdrawal, you will need to log into your account on the [ELC Parent Portal](#) via the OCDSB website and submit a withdrawal request with an end date to your child/ren's schedule. Withdrawal requests require two weeks paid notice to process and you will be responsible for all fees associated with the two-week notice period. Once the withdrawal has been completed, you will receive an email notification verifying the end date in the program. A refund will then be processed if applicable.

Please note: Refunds, if applicable, will follow in the next billing cycle.

Use of Registered ELC Space

The OCDSB reserves the right to reach out to families whose child's program spot remains consistently unused. Families will have the choice to either utilize the registered space or withdraw from the program. This ensures we can best accommodate waitlisted families in need of care.

Updated Parent or Child Information

It is the parent's/caregiver's responsibility to update their account on the [ELC Parent Portal](#) with any changes to work information, telephone numbers, address, email address, child's medical conditions and emergency contact information.

Fees

Base Fees

All of the programs under the OCDSB Early Learning Department (ELD) serve both fee paying and subsidized children. The OCDSB has a Purchase of Service Agreement with the City of Ottawa which sets out the guidelines regarding subsidies. Budgets are based on the cost of operating the programs for a twelve (12) month period, and fees are calculated from costs reflected in the budgets. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board makes every effort to keep parent fees as low as we possibly can. Parents will be given a minimum of one (1) month notice of any increases to fees. Fees will

be collected through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The monthly fee is due on the first day of each month and will be deducted from your bank account within the first 3 business days of the month. If your child starts after the monthly fees have been processed, your first month's fee will be processed along with next month's fees.

For the fee information, please see the [Early Learning Centre 2025–2026 Fees and Locations](#) on the OCDSB website.

Fee Subsidies

In order for your child to receive a subsidy for the Early Learning Centre, you must apply through the [City of Ottawa Child Care Registry and Waitlist \(CCRAW\)](#). When you add your name to the Registry, you will have the option to apply for a subsidy or call the City of Ottawa at 311 for assistance.

Insufficient Funds Charges/Overdue Fees

Any fees returned due to insufficient funds are subject to a \$30 administration fee (Non Base Fee). The OCDSB will make a second attempt on the 15th of the month (or the first business day if the 15th falls on the weekend) to recover the missed payment along with the \$30 NSF (Non-Base Fee). If fees remain in arrears for more than 30 days, your childcare services will be reviewed by the General Manager to determine what action will be taken to collect the overdue fees.

The OCDSB may require payment by bank draft/certified cheque if fees are in arrears for more than 60 days. At that point, the OCDSB reserves the right to suspend childcare services until full payment is received.

Please note that where fees remain in arrears at the end of a school year, caregivers will not be able to register their child(ren) for any ELC programs for the upcoming school year.

Overpayment of Fees

Any overpayment of fees for any reason will result in the OCDSB issuing a credit or refund to families.

Income Tax Child Care Receipts

Families will be provided with a receipt for their child care expenses for the previous calendar year by the end of February. The names and amounts on the receipt are based on the information provided through the ELC parent portal. These receipts will be available to parents under the Finances tab in the [ELC Parent Portal](#).

Daily Attendance

Arrival and Pick Up (Signing In and Out)

Please ensure that you speak to an ELC staff member and have a face-to-face interaction at drop-off and pick-up. Please note that this is legislatively required and that the educator team must ensure this process is followed.

Please make sure the onsite Early Learning Centre educators are aware of any alternate pick-up arrangements for a child. In the interest of safety, no child will be released to an individual without prior consent from the parent/caregiver, and no child will be released to leave the program alone. Children will only be released to a parent or caregiver, unless a written arrangement for release to another individual has been made with a staff member. If your child is being released to a person under the age of 16, a consent form will be required.

Individuals must be prepared to show photo identification when picking up their child from the program.

If unforeseen circumstances occur (such as inclement weather) where the ELC educator is not present when the program opens, parents must stay with their children until the ELC educator arrives.

If educators suspect that the adult picking up a child is visibly impaired to drive and alternate pick-up arrangements are not made, staff may conclude that the child may be in danger of suffering physical harm. In such circumstances the staff person cannot withhold the release of the child; however, they are obligated to report their concerns to the Ottawa Police immediately.



Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy and Procedures

The OCDSB Early Learning Centre commits to releasing a child only to their parent/guardian or an individual explicitly authorized by the parent/guardian through written consent on the Authorization for Pick-Up form in DIGIBOT.

The OCDSB Early Learning Centre will not release children without supervision and will strictly adhere to dismissal procedures.

In cases where a child's arrival or dismissal deviates from the expected routine, staff is required to follow the procedures outlined below.

Accepting a Child into Care

When receiving a child in the morning, program staff must:

- Engage in a face-to-face drop-off with the parent/guardian.
- Inquire about the child's recent experiences and any changes to the pick-up procedure.

- Verify authorization for alternative pick-ups through DIGIBOT or, if unlisted, obtain written consent from the parent/guardian and update DIGIBOT accordingly.
- Document changes in the pick-up procedure in the daily written record.

Child Not Arriving

- Where a child does not arrive at the Early Learning Centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or advised the closing staff at pick-up), the school will follow safe arrival protocol and the Program Coordinator will follow up with a phone call to the family for unexplained absence.
- Once the child's absence has been confirmed, program staff shall document any additional information about the child's absence in the daily written record as needed.

Releasing a Child from Early Learning Centre

The supervising educator at pick-up will:

- Release the child only to the parent/guardian or an authorized individual with written consent.
- Confirm unfamiliar individuals with another staff member or request photo identification.
- Contact parents/guardians by 6:00 p.m. if a child remains uncollected, engaging them in activities while awaiting pick-up.
- Contact additional contacts on the authorization list if necessary.
- Notify the Program Coordinator for support if the parent/guardian cannot be reached.
- If no contact is established by 6:30 p.m., contact local authorities and inform the Team Manager and General Manager.

Late Fees

We encourage you to arrive by 5:45 p.m. to pick up your child. This ensures you have the time and the opportunity to connect with the educator and to allow for an unrushed ending to your child/ren's day. We do recognize that in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances, parents may occasionally be late in picking up their children. When this occurs, parents are required to notify the on-site ELC staff at the earliest opportunity. Late pick-ups cause difficulties both for the educators and the children waiting to be picked up. Parents and caregivers are responsible for picking up a child no later than 6:00 p.m.

- Late pick-up occurrences are based per family;
- First late pick-up: Will result in a verbal warning and will be documented by the Team Manager;

- Second late pick-up: A charge of ten dollars (\$10.00) for the first fifteen minutes or any part thereof and then \$1.00 (Non-base fee) for every consecutive minute thereafter;
- Should a parent be late more than 3 times, the late fee will double;
- Late fees will be charged and paid on the next billing cycle;
- All documented late fees are available via your parent portal. Once paid, they will be absolved as of September 1st each year and new records kept for the following year;
- Individual concerns regarding the Late Fee policy should be addressed to the Program Coordinator;
- If parents or caregivers disregard the Late Fee policy, the OCDSB reserves the right to withdraw access to the ELC.

Absenteeism

If you know your child will be absent for a day or part of the day that will impact the Early Learning Centre, please notify the on-site educator of any upcoming absences. Contact information for your child's ELC site will be emailed to you once your child is registered in the program. Parents are requested to not email/phone the Early Learning Department to inform of ELC absences. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give families a rebate or reduction of the monthly fee as a result of a child being absent from the program.

School and ELC Closures

Schools may need to close due to various reasons such as facility failures, power outages, gas leaks, and plumbing issues. In the event of natural disasters like storms, tornadoes, or earthquakes, the Early Learning Centre will not be available. Notifications of school closures may be issued through formal notices, broadcasted by most local radio stations, and posted on the OCDSB website.

If bus services are canceled due to severe weather conditions, schools will remain open, and consequently, the Early Learning Centre will also operate for children with regular attendance schedules. Parents are responsible for transporting their child/children to and from the program.

ELC closures can occur due to various reasons including facility failures, power outages, plumbing issues, inability to meet legislative ratios, and safety concerns. It's important to note that both school and ELC closures are not an exhaustive list, and other situations may lead to closures.

The OCDSB Early Learning Centres operate as a not-for-profit service, requiring parental fees to maintain financial viability and cover salaries. Therefore, no credits or refunds will be issued when the OCDSB is compelled to close a school(s) or the Early Learning Centre(s).

Transportation

Please note that transportation to and from the Early Learning Centre is the caregiver's responsibility. If you are not able to pick your child up from ELC, please ensure you make alternate arrangements.

Health and Safety

Illness/Hospitalization

If your child contracts any communicable disease, you are required to notify the program immediately. We work in partnership with Ottawa Public Health to ensure appropriate measures are taken to minimize the spread of infection. Ottawa Public Health requests that when outbreaks occur, the programs exclude children who have certain communicable diseases until certain criteria are met for a healthy return to care.

If your child is hospitalized for a minimum of twenty four (24) hours, please notify the child's program immediately.

Upon arrival at the childcare program or throughout the day, staff may determine that a child is "not well enough" to attend the program. If this is the case, the child will be isolated and the parent/caregiver will be notified to pick up their child as soon as possible.

Ottawa Public Health has set forth certain policies to protect all children. Your child may not attend the program if they suffer from the following:

1. A fever of 38 degrees Celsius or higher (100.3 Fahrenheit)
2. Gastroenteritis: Including vomiting and/or diarrhea (must be symptom-free for 48 hours prior to returning)
3. Croupy cough and green discharge from the nose
4. Any unexplained rash or skin irritation
5. Complains of a bad headache or sore throat
6. Eyes/ears that are oozing any form of discharge (must be on antibiotics for 24 hours prior to readmission)
7. Strep Throat (must be on antibiotics for 24 hours prior to readmission)

Accidents/Incidents

While attending the ELC, children are supervised at all times by the educators. However, accidents or incidents can happen while children are exploring their indoor and outdoor environments. If your child is injured while participating in activities, in most cases educators will communicate with you when you arrive to pick up your child.

Should the injury require further medical attention, we will contact you and/or your emergency contacts as soon as possible.

To meet legislative requirements, educators must provide a copy of an injury/incident to the caregiver. Should an accident occur at home that may impact your child's participation in the ELC, please ensure that you inform the Program Coordinator.

Administration Of Medication

Written permission from a parent/caregiver is legislatively required to administer both prescription and non-prescription medication to a child while attending one of our programs. Parents/Caregivers are required to complete a Medication Authorization Form.

All medication must be in the original container, clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage, administration, storage instructions and possible side effects. Medication must be kept in a locked box inaccessible to children. Epi Pens and Asthma medication will be in a designated place in consultation with the parents or caregivers.

For everyone's safety, **please do not leave medication of any kind in your child's cubby or backpack.**

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that can be life-threatening. It requires avoidance strategies and immediate response in the event of an emergency. These policies and procedures are intended to help meet the needs and save the lives of children with severe allergies and provide relevant and important information on anaphylaxis to parents/caregivers, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the ELC program.



This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under *Ontario Regulation 137/15* for an anaphylactic policy for child care programs. The requirements set out in this policy align with *Sabrina's Law, 2005*.

Individualized Plans and Emergency Procedures for Children with Life-Threatening/Anaphylactic Allergies

- Before attending the Early Learning Centre, the Program Coordinator will speak with the parent of a child to obtain information about any medical conditions if noted on their application, including whether the child is at risk of having an anaphylactic reaction.
- All individualized plans and emergency procedures will be made readily accessible at all times to all staff and students at the Early Learning Centre.
- Every child's epinephrine auto-injector must be carried everywhere the child goes.

Strategies to Reduce the Risk of Exposure to Anaphylactic Allergens

The following strategies to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents must be followed at all times by employees and students at the Early Learning Centre.

- Do not serve foods where its ingredients are not known.
- The ingredients will be reviewed before food is served to children to verify that causative agents are not served to children with anaphylactic allergies.
- In cases where a child has food allergies and the food provided by the Early Learning Centre cannot meet the child's needs, ask the child's parent/caregiver to supply food for their child.
- Where food is provided from home for children, ensure that appropriate supervision of children is maintained so that food is not shared or exchanged.
- Do not use craft/sensory materials and toys that are labelled with known allergens.
- Make sure each child's individual plan and emergency procedure are kept up-to-date and that all staff and placement students are trained on the plans.
- Refer to the allergy list and ensure that it is up-to-date and implemented.
- Update staff and placement students when changes to a child's allergies, signs and symptoms, and treatment occur and review all updates to individualized plans and emergency procedures.

Communication Plan

The following is our communication plan for sharing information on life-threatening and anaphylactic allergies with staff, students, parents and families.

- Please ensure that your child's full name is on their food brought from home and water bottle;
- Parents/caregivers will be encouraged not to send foods that contain ingredients to which children may be allergic.
- A list of all children's allergies including food and other causative agents will be posted in the kitchen, rooms and accessible to all staff.
- Each child with an anaphylactic allergy will have an individualized plan and emergency procedures that detail signs and symptoms specific to the child describing how to identify that they are having an allergic reaction and what to do if they experience a reaction.
- Each child's individualized plan and emergency procedures will be made available and accessible wherever the child may be present.
- The Team Manager will communicate with the Ministry of Education by reporting serious occurrences where an anaphylactic reaction occurs in accordance with the established Serious Occurrence Policy and Procedures.
- This communication plan will be continually reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of the Early Learning Centre and that it is effectively achieving its intended result.

Drug and Medication Requirements

- Where drugs or medications will need to be administered to a child in response to an anaphylactic reaction, the drug and Medication Administration Policy will be followed including the completion of a parental authorization form to administer drugs or medications.
- Emergency allergy medication (e.g. oral allergy medications, puffers and epinephrine auto-injectors) will be allowed to remain unlocked or carried by the staff.

Nutrition

OCDSB Early Learning Centres aligns with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board guidelines for addressing the needs of students/children with severe or life-threatening medical conditions. These guidelines are in compliance with Sabrina's Law,

Ryan's Law and all other relevant legislation. OCDSB *Procedure PR.548*. SCO meets the recommendations set out in the Health Canada document "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide." A healthy menu is provided each day on site. The menu includes a morning and afternoon snack as well as lunch. Menus are posted on site at the Early Learning Centre as well as your Digibot Parent Portal. Any changes to the menu are posted daily. Ottawa Public Health and the Ministry of Education both inspect and review the menu.

OCDSB Early Learning Centres practice family-style dining for all meals and snacks served throughout the day. Family-style dining is a method of serving food to our children by bringing the main and side dishes to the table in serving bowls; this allows the children to serve themselves. The goal of family-style dining is for children to develop self-help skills, social skills, empower them to make their own food choices and create pride and ownership of the food they are eating. Children scoop their own portions and pour their own milk/water, improving fine motor skills. In our classes, a teacher is present at every table. The educators are a role model, sitting and engaging in positive conversation, while eating with the children. The children interact with their peers by taking turns, asking one another to pass the serving bowl or for more of a particular food. By dining together as a cohesive group, with both their peers and teachers, children look around and see the members of the group enjoying the food, which makes them much more likely to try it too! In addition to creating a supportive meal environment, family-style dining promotes the tradition of enjoying conversation



and healthy nutritious food together. At the end of the meal, the children scrape their own plates and help with clean-up.

Safety is our utmost concern. If your child has any food allergies or restrictions, it is very important to identify the allergies or restrictions in your child/ren's e-registration (DIGIBOT) information. It is the parents' responsibility to make any changes or modifications through the [Parent Portal](#). Please communicate with the on-site educators, and an appropriate alternative will be provided.

Sleep Policy and Supervision

In accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, we are required to provide children with a rest/quiet time each day. All children are assigned their own cot. We provide the cots and sheets, and we ask that you provide a blanket for your child's comfort. If you do not have a blanket, one will be provided for your child. If a blanket is not your child's preferred item to rest, please provide us with a preferred cuddle toy. Blankets or rest time toys will be sent home weekly to be washed and will be required to be returned the following day.

We recognize that children have varied needs in regards to sleep and rest. The educator teams will provide an environment conducive to their needs. Staff check children under the age of 30 months periodically during sleep for signs of distress or unusual behaviour. These checks are not required for preschool aged children or those engaging in quiet activities, but these children will be supervised at all times. These checks are documented and available for parents to see. If there are any significant changes in a child's sleep pattern, this will be communicated to the parent. We are following information set out by the Ministry, as well as the "[Safe Sleep For Your Baby](#)" and the "[Joint Statement on Safe Sleep: Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada](#)" document provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

What Do I Need to Bring?

We encourage the children to explore their environment in many ways. On occasion, this may require a change of clothes. It is necessary that all children have a change of clothes at the centre. All items provided by families must be clearly labelled with your child's name or initials. Children require appropriate footwear for all activities and weather conditions. Children must wear sandals with a back strap, running shoes or boots when using playground equipment. Families are required to provide diapers, wipes and necessary ointments if required.

Please note: We are scent-free facility, please ensure the products you provide are fragrance-free.

Participation in Outdoor Play Fostering Natural Curiosity

We venture outside in all seasons experiencing all kinds of weather. Weather-proof or durable waterproof seasonal wear makes children's participation in the outdoors possible and enjoyable. Mittens are preferable to gloves as they are warmer and easier for children to put on. Parents can anticipate providing extra mittens in winter, splash pants in spring, and hats, sunscreen and water bottles for the summer weather. We track the weather forecast to support parent planning for outdoor play.



In the outdoors, educators involve your child in dramatic play, music, story telling, art, the study of plants, mapping activities, animals and insects. Active and outdoor play in daily programming also provides opportunities for increased physical activity for children. Emphasis will be on participation and enjoyment that encourage children to explore their natural environment. Extra care will be taken to ensure children are supported as they experiment, inquire and engage in developmentally appropriate activities. This is consistent with the principles outlined in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*, which include creating opportunities for children to engage in active play that allow them to connect with the natural world and their community.

Due to staff ratio requirements outdoors, we cannot offer children the option of staying indoors. If child/ren are not well enough to play outdoors, this is an indicator that they are not well enough to participate in all the activities, and therefore should not attend the Early Learning Centre. We will ask for your child/ren to remain at home until they are well enough to participate in every aspect of the day.

Field Trips

With parent/caregiver consent, walking trips on school grounds will occur on occasion. Early Learning Centre field trip activities could also include visits to the school gym for indoor active play or school performances.

Non-Smoking Policy

Smoking, including vaping, is forbidden on school property at all times.

Fire Drill and Lockdown Practices

To ensure the health and safety of children and educators, Emergency Management Measures are in place outlining the roles and responsibilities of employees. All programs conduct monthly fire drills and follow evacuation procedures. This ensures

that all children become familiar with emergency procedures. In the event of a real emergency when the children cannot return to the Centre they will be moved to our designated emergency shelter and parents will be contacted by email via digibot or phone call to pick up their children immediately.

Serious Occurrence Notification

In the case of any situation considered a Serious Occurrence, it is a requirement for all programs to post a Ministry of Education Serious Occurrence Notification Form next to the licensing information in the program. This form will be posted for a minimum of 10 business days.

Behaviour Guidance

Learning to be respectful of shared materials and spaces, expressing emotions and negotiating diverse thinking are a daily occurrence in shared experiences. We regard these circumstances as teachable moments by providing both the children and adults the opportunity to negotiate differing opinions, voice their frustrations and collaboratively solve problems. When these situations arise, we listen carefully to each child, encourage them to listen to one another and support them as they identify with each other's feelings when possible.

"Grounded in a view of the child as competent and capable of complex thinking" (HDLH,2014), educators work with the children to help them develop their own sense of self-discipline. Staff recognize the importance of stressing the positive with children, redirecting them as much as possible. Limits are expressed clearly to the children, with reasons and logical consequences.

Together, the educators and the children work to co-construct solutions and reflect on whether these solutions are working. We make time and space available for children to resolve misunderstandings all while ensuring that it is age or developmentally appropriate. The educators support the children as they reflect on the consequences of their actions and provide alternative options. There may be occasions when the educators ask for family support during relational learning opportunities. Parents will be informed of any behavioural incidents involving their child that occur during their child's day. In some cases, an incident report will be completed by educators; in order to document behaviours, and identify strategies to assist in addressing inappropriate behaviours.

Neither physical nor verbal punishment, nor withdrawal of basic needs, care or affection is used to discipline the children, we ask you to respect these limitations while in the centre. The method of adult intervention used allows for decision making and self-discipline on the part of the child, resulting in a positive rather than a negative experience.

Prohibited Practices

As determined by legislation, (*Ontario Regulation 137/15, Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*) these provisions forbid physical punishment and other harmful disciplinary practices to protect the emotional and physical well-being of children. They set out clear directions regarding prohibitive practices to support the overall well-being of children.

These practices are never permitted in a program.

Furthermore, no employee of the OCDSB, or student who is on an educational placement with the OCDSB, shall engage (i.e. implement) any of these prohibited practices.

Young children benefit from an affirming approach that encourages positive interactions with other children and with adults, rather than from a negative or punitive approach to managing unwanted behaviour.

None of the following practices are observed in the program:

- A. Corporal punishment (which may include but is not limited to: hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching)
- B. Physical restraint of children, for discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless for the purpose of preventing self-harm, harm to others, and only until risk of harm/injury is no longer imminent
- C. Locking of the exits of the classroom for the purpose of confining a child, or confining the area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency
- D. Use of harsh, degrading measures or threats or derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, frighten the child or undermine their self-respect, dignity or self-worth
- E. Depriving a child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding
- F. Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will

Student Educator Involvement

If co-op or placement students wish to participate within the program, it is a requirement that these individuals present a current Police Records check to the OCDSB prior to their first visit. In addition, any students must read and sign off on the Program Policies and Procedures, medical plans, plans of care and any anaphylaxis plans that have been put in place. At no time will a placement or co-op student be alone with the children and will always be supervised by a staff member as per our Student Supervision Policy.

Child, Parent/Caregiver and Staff Code Of Conduct

The OCDSB strives to provide a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment for all. Children, parents/caregivers and staff are asked to adhere to the Respectful Workplace and School District Code of Conduct policies linked below:

- [Respectful Workplace](#)
- [School District Code of Conduct](#)

Duty To Report

Section 125 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA)* imposes a duty to report for everyone, including RECEs, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect one or more of the following with respect to a child:

- Emotional Harm: The child has suffered emotional harm, or there is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm demonstrated by serious: anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or delayed development.
- There are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child. These include but are not limited to: Physical and/or sexual harm, abandonment, acts of a criminal nature and exposure to family violence, which can take the form of physical, sexual, emotional or financial harm as well as neglect.

Persons failing to do so are subject to legal action and a fine if convicted. Failure to report under the CYFSA may also have consequences for members of the College under the ECE Act and the regulations of the College.

[Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: It's Your Duty](#)

Parent Issues and Concerns

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in our Early Learning Centres by regularly discussing what their child(ren) are experiencing with our program. As supported by our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, child care providers and staff, and foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children. Our staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during interactions.

All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved.

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within 2 business day(s). The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process.

Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial and respectful to parties involved and follow all OCDSB policies and procedures.

Confidentiality

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff and placement students, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Conduct

Our Early Learning Centres maintain high standards for positive interaction, communication and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party. The OCDSB reserves the right to withdraw children from our program if any parent/guardian contravenes the Code of Conduct.

If at any point a parent/guardian, provider or staff feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the Program Coordinator and/or Team Manager.

Concerns About the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the local [Children's Aid Society \(CAS\)](#) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the Child and Family Services Act, as well as to the OCDSB investigator.

For more information, visit the [Children's Aid Society](#).

OCDSB Early Learning Centre Locations

The parent handbook and all policies and procedures contained within are applicable at the following OCDSB ELC locations:

- Queen Elizabeth Early Learning Centre - 689 St. Laurent Blvd
- Shingwàkons Early Learning Centre - 480 Cope Dr.
- Woodroffe HS Early Learning Centre - 2410 Georgina Dr.



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Updated September 2025