

**Philosophy:**

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

**Learning:**

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

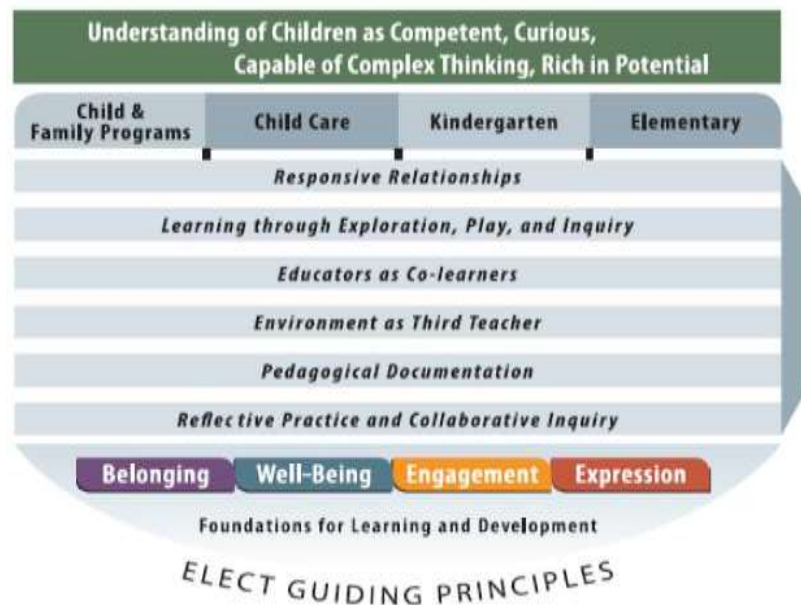
**Pedagogy:**

The method and practice of teaching – how learning happens.

At Inspiring Minds Early Learning Centre (Inspiring Minds ELC), we believe children learn best through the relationships built with their families, other caring adults and their peers. Our centre offers a compassionate and respectful environment which recognizes and honours the children and families who have become a part of our community.

**Program and Healthy Development**

We are committed to providing maximum quality, safe and nurturing child care. Our philosophy is influenced by *“How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)”* and the curriculum approach is emergent and play-based, which focuses on children’s interests and curiosities. We view each child as a capable, competent, unique individual who brings wonderful qualities and much knowledge to share with others. Each child is recognized and supported in a manner that respects the child’s emotional, social, intellectual and physical needs.



**Inquiry:**

The act of asking questions in order to gather information.

The educators, environment and appropriately selected learning materials promote children’s inquiry and independent exploration through play. Through the use of regular inspections and risk-benefit analysis, educators ensure a safe environment in which each child is encouraged to use his/her natural curiosity, independence and creativity to hypothesize and test his/her own

ideas. In order for children to be able to take the necessary risks for healthy development, we encourage mutual trust and respect between the children, the educators and the environment.

At the heart of our program are:

- each child's individual learning style
- child-centred activities and
- purposeful play.

We believe play is a child's work and the educator's role includes guidance and facilitation. Through observation and reflection of the children's capabilities and interests the educators scaffold on the child's learning by:

- asking thought-provoking questions
- making connections,
- providing challenging, open-ended materials and opportunities.

By allowing mistakes to happen, children are able to observe and analyze the outcome and thus learn from these mistakes.

We believe all experiences matter - from the first greeting in the morning, to playing purposefully, to a neighbourhood walk, to eating lunch, to resting, to going home. The daily routines, transitions, materials and even the room set-up are designed to support children's independence and confidence. Schedules are as flexible as possible within the constraints of the day.

Outdoor play is a vital component to our daily program and has an important role in the well-being and development of the whole child. The outdoor environment provides a unique stimulus that captures the interests of children through the exploration of natural elements. Activities provide opportunities for improved physical stamina, fine and gross motor development, creativity, confidence, social skills and communication.

Children's development includes their physical, mental and emotional wellness. Healthy nutrition is one contributing factor of physical health. Inspiring Minds ELC provides catered snacks and lunches, which follow Canada's Food Guide and are reviewed by a registered dietician. For children registered in our full day and Forest and Nature programs, we provide a wide variety of food, from which the children choose what and how much to eat. Included on the menu are whole grains, a variety of fruits and vegetables, and proteins including, fish and occasional

**Scaffolding:**

A process through which educators support and guide children to build upon their emerging abilities and interests.

**Respect:**

Acceptance of others for who they are, even when different from you or you don't agree with them. (Kids help line)

**Confidence:**

Trusting in yourself and your abilities

**Risk-Taking:**

The act or fact of doing something that involves stepping out of your comfort zone in order to achieve a goal.

**Empathy:**

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another. (Dictionary.com)

**Belonging:**

A sense of connectedness with others through shared experiences and contributions within a community.

**Well-Being:**

The experiences of health, happiness, meaning and purpose.

**Resiliency:**

The ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

vegetarian meals. Families in our before and after school programs bring snacks, and we provide a fruit and grain product for children who do not have their own snack.

A child's mental and emotional health are influenced by the four foundations of belonging, well-being, expression and engagement, along with our values of respect, confidence, risk-taking and empathy. The foundations and our values shape our program, influence our decisions and ensure a secure environment.

**Belonging:**

In order for children and families to feel connected, we meet each person where they are and value their contribution. We believe that by acknowledging different opinions the end results are respect, inclusion and empathy. When children see themselves as a valued contributor, their confidence and self-image flourish and as a result, they are eager to participate, play purposely and show care and concern for others.

**Well-being:**

Emotional and social learning are at the core of well-being in the early years. Children's unique identity is valued through respecting their knowledge and trusting them to understand their limitations. Children are co-contributors in our program and we are inspired by their intrinsic curiosity, their willingness to make and learn from mistakes. Educators model strategies which assist children to develop useful and appropriate strategies to self-regulate and express their feelings, remain calm, recognize the effect of their actions on others and build resiliency.

**Expression**

Expression can take many forms, whether it is through spoken language, dance, art, music or creative use of materials. Practicing how to express feelings and emotions and communicate with others is an essential part of each child's holistic development. Children's and families' thoughts and opinions are a valuable addition to our community. Educators communicate and engage in meaningful interactions with each child and family. Through modelling positive expression, children practice inclusion, empathy, respect as well as language and literacy skills.

**Self-Regulation:**

The conscious or unconscious control of one's body, relationships and other aspects of oneself.

**Expression:**

The process of making visible one's interests, thoughts and feelings.

**Inclusion:**

Including or being included within a group.

**Engagement:**

Being involved and focused in order to explore the world, using body, mind and senses.

**Planning:**

The act of preparing and designing experiences and activities.

**Provocation:**

Something that stimulates thought and inquiry.

**Developmental Domains:**

Categories that are used to manage the vast amount of information about development including:

- motor/physical
- cognitive
- social/emotional
- communication
- self-help.

**Engagement**

Children learn best when engaged in purposeful play. It is during play children construct meaning, display their understanding of the world and demonstrate growing abilities. Open-ended materials and questions create purposeful play, opportunities for problem-solving and innovative thinking. Learning happens outside one's comfort zone; a variety of experiences are provided to encourage creativity and appropriate risk-taking. Educators use their understanding of the individual child, along with their knowledge of child development, to guide, scaffold, encourage and support children to ensure their full participation.

**Educators**

Educators play an integral role in the program quality. Educators employed at Inspiring Minds ELC are dedicated professionals who have trained or are training in the field of Early Childhood Education. They reflect on and document their observations of the children's learning and the overall program. We pride ourselves on building meaningful relationships with the children and families in our community within a community.

Our educators recognize the value of play and the connection between play and development. Experiences are child-initiated and adult-supported. The educators provide additions, or provocations and invitations based on their observations and the children's capabilities and curiosities. As co-constructors, the educators also add to the children's interests with their own interests in order to broaden the children's knowledge. By allowing children to follow their interests, taking risks becomes an essential part of our programs. Through appropriate risks, children are able to learn about themselves and thus develop the confidence required to succeed.

We believe life-long learning is important for everyone at Inspiring Minds ELC. When educators actively engage in and reflect on professional development, the quality of early learning and care increases. Through development opportunities, educators continually learn and build upon their practices. Inspiring Minds ELC provides opportunities for educators to attend workshops, conferences and training such as Standard First Aid and CPR, WHMIS and Food Handler Certification, as

**Reflective Practice:**

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

well as share their own learning and development with colleagues informally, at team meetings and through a Community of Practice.

Inspiring Minds ELC mentors students who are in high school, college or university through co-op placements. We encourage open dialogue between student and educator in order that we may learn from each other and strengthen and support our profession. Students and volunteers are not responsible for supervising children in our care.

Following the premises that every behaviour has a reason and all interactions build relationships, we do not permit:

- corporal punishment
- the deprivation of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding
- locking the exits of the centre for the purpose of confining children, or confining a child in any locked room or structure or being left without supervision
- harsh or degrading measures or threats that would humiliate, shame, frighten a child or undermine a child's self-respect, dignity or self-worth
- physical restraint of a child for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision
- inflicting bodily harm on a child, including making a child eat or drink against his/her will or using food as a means to control and/or reward behaviour.

Suspected infractions of these guidelines are reported to and investigated by the Director or Supervisor.

**Self-Worth:**

The feeling that you are a good person who deserves to be treated with respect.

**Partnerships**

Creating and maintaining open partnerships with families only improves our connection with children. Parents and guardians know their children best and are a valued resource. Face to face and written communication with parents and guardians along with documentation of learning are integral to building and maintaining our connection. Inspiring Minds ELC offers opportunities for parents to be actively involved in our organization. They are welcome to enter the program rooms at any time during the day, share their own interests and experiences as special guests, sit on the Board of Directors or a

**Documentation:**

Samples of group projects or individual children's interest and work, using direct quotes, reflections on and descriptions of the children's learning.

**Pedagogical  
Documentation:**

Making children's questions, misconceptions and learning visible as well as understood from a developmental perspective.

**Inclusiveness:**

Being open to everyone or everything.

committee and join in the varied social and fundraising events offered throughout the year.

We are committed to maintaining ongoing and establishing new community partnerships which strengthen our service. We work with community agencies, such as KidsAbility and KW Habilitation, in order to support the educators, children and families. Individual plans can be developed in conjunction with parents, educators and community agencies in order to support a child's personal growth and development. Another way we develop partnerships is by viewing the immediate Wellesley area as a resource by inviting community members into our program as visitors and taking excursions in the village.

We work with Wellesley Public School in order to ease the transition to and from our kindergarten and school age programs. As well, educators are happy to participate in school conferences to support the child and family.

Each year, we raise funds for an outside organization that supports a family from Inspiring Minds ELC (such as Muscular Dystrophy Canada), in order to model inclusiveness and give back to society.

**Evaluation and Review**

We invite parents, staff and community partners to provide feedback to the Director or Board of Directors at any time. The staff, parents and Board members are given the opportunity to provide their honest feedback through annual surveys. From the responses, we seek ways to improve and better serve the people who work, volunteer and register with our organization.

Our program statement is a living document which is reviewed by staff, students and volunteers prior to employment or placement and regularly thereafter.