

George Brown College's Lab School Philosophy
*CHILDREN REQUIRE ENVIRONMENTS THAT RESPECT WHO THEY ARE AND
WHO THEY ARE BECOMING.*

“COMPETENT, CAPABLE, CURIOUS, AND RICH IN POTENTIAL.”

GBC/Lab Child Care Centres achieve this by designing programs that plan for each child's individuality while providing opportunities to develop the skills necessary to adapt and thrive. We balance the needs of the individual and the group.

We integrate current research, theory and practice, knowledge of children, families and community, and recent studies of health and well-being to create programs.

The principals in the document **How Does Learning Happen?: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Learning Years** serves as a guide to inform our program and is incorporated into ongoing discussions with Staff, families and other key stakeholders as a means to inform our practice and our program development. Our program is informed by the four foundational conditions outlined in the Ministry document that are important for children to grow and flourish: **Belonging, Well-Being; Engagement and Expression**. These foundations or “ways of being” are threaded through all aspects all aspects of the program and underpin our goals for children and expectations for the program. Our program statement is reviewed annually by the program team, the faculty and the Program Advisory Committee.

The principal that children are respected as **“being competent, capable, curious and rich in potential”** is foundational in our practice. Each child develops in a unified process. Since all elements of development are of equal importance, our programs facilitate social, emotional, intellectual, language and physical skill development. **We provide inclusive child care** that reflects a belief that all children belong together as a whole group, with the appropriate supports required for success. **We foster each child's sense of belonging** between themselves, other children, adults and the world around them.

A safe, healthy environment is fundamental to all program activity. Children are supported to interact and communicate in a positive way and we foster their ability to self-regulate. Guidance in each program involves setting clear limits that protect children from harm and to teach acceptable behavior. Appropriate guidance supports the child to feel secure enough to reach out and learn. Necessary limits are individualized and are balanced with admiration for children's achievements and strengths. We use consistent daily routines that supply predictability that helps a child learn what to expect from the world and feel confident to explore it.

To establish security while in child care, early childhood professionals respond to child's needs and signals in positive way. Relationships that provide security lead to higher self-esteem and confidence, greater willingness to explore, better control over emotions, and greater problem solving ability. Programs balance achievable challenges in a secure environment.

We value and respect the **early learning and development that takes place in the context of families and communities establishing pathways for lifelong learning, behavior and health**. Because we recognize the primary importance of families in the lives of children, we act to support each child's attachments to their family. Each child's family is recognized as the most important influence in the child's growth and development. Identity and family culture are valued. Respect and openness are promoted through appreciation for family values and we know that our relationships with children must create a continuity of care with home. **Our program planning documents and supports building connections and partnerships with both home and family life as well as the community**. We avoid preconceived notions create

barriers that reduce families' engagement and equitable outcomes.

Our program uses an Emergent Curriculum approach in which environments and experiences are designed to engage children in active, creative and meaningful exploration, play and inquiry. In play, children's curiosity and joy ensures that ideas and skills become meaningful. Play is the basis of our curriculum because it provides many opportunities for interacting with others and exploring the world while problem-solving, seeing patterns, making predictions, testing them and evaluating the results. Play motivates children's attention and offers challenges that are within the child's capacity to master. Curriculum is planned based on observation of children's skills, developments and interests. Educators share in the joy of each child's achievements. This promotes confidence and helps to integrate learning. In play, they are learning about the social world and the world of things. In their play children hear and use language. They practice emerging number and literacy skills. Programs are planned to ensure that activities and experiences are balanced and are interspersed into the flow of the program day with the provision of periods for children to renew, refresh and re-energize themselves with appropriate nutrition breaks, rest periods and opportunities to address personal hygiene needs.

It is in this high quality program experience that children think, express feelings, define what is fair, build physical strength, and interact with peers and adults. Children cope with ups and downs and recover from distress, learning strategies for self-regulation. They develop a sense of self and belonging. All these build competent, flexible adaptation that nurtures children through change and stability in their lives.

Continuity of learning is essential to GBC curriculum so we build on families' unique knowledge of their children and support reciprocal home and centre learning. At GBC Lab Child Care Centres we create communities that promote learning, development and recognize that is happens with in the context of relationships among children, families, and educators.

Our **Lab School Programs** are informed by the research and theory of our College classrooms. We value the knowledge and experience of our qualified Staff as well as the commitment and willingness to learn that our faculty and student educators bring to the program. **Staff is committed to reflective practice, collaborative inquiry, and continuous learning** and to that end these activities are supported via a variety of professional learning opportunities throughout the year.

PLAY IS A MEANS TO EARLY LEARNING THAT CAPITALIZES ON CHILDREN'S NATURAL CURIOSITY AND EXUBERANCE.

"The developmental literature is clear: play stimulates physical, social, emotional and cognitive development in the early years. Children need time, space, materials and the support of informed families and thoughtful, skilled Early Childhood Educators in order to become master players. They need time to play for the sake of playing".¹

Pedagogy is about how learning takes place. Play is child-centered activity that engages a young child and promotes learning.²

Play is how children make sense of the world and is an effective method of learning for young children. Ideas and skills become meaningful; tools for learning are practiced; and concepts are understood.

Play engages children's attention when it offers a challenge that is within the child's capacity to master. Early Childhood settings that value children's play create a "climate of delight" that honours childhood (EFTO 1999). Effective settings take advantage of play and embed opportunities for learning in the physical environment and play activities.

Children who thrive in primary school and whose pathways are set for later academic success are those who enter Grade 1 with strong oral communication skills are confident, able to make friends, are persistent and creative in completing tasks and solving problems and excited to learn.³ These are the same qualities that children strengthen through high quality play during their early years.

Quotes from ELECT (Early Learning for Every Child Today- January 2007)