

The School House Parent Handbook

This Handbook provides parents with basic information about The School House. By ensuring that this information is understood and followed, The School House will provide children with safe, reliable, high quality care.

If there are any questions or concerns, please speak with The School House staff at the centre, talk to the Supervisor or Call The owner/ Operator Katelynn Garvin at 519-972-1001 or 519-974-6222 For further information on who to contact, please refer to the “Contacting The School House”

Introduction to The School House

High Quality Early Learning and Child Care for Children

The School House Child Care Services is a child care centre, providing high quality licensed child care and early childhood education for children from six weeks to 12 years of age. Two locations in Windsor, Ontario. (South and Central)

The School House operates two Early Learning Centres. The School House operates on a fee-for-service basis. Established in 2013, The School House has built a solid reputation as an excellent provider of Early Learning and Child Care. The School House believes that parents are entitled to affordable, accessible, safe, reliable, well-managed, high quality child care for their children. Recognizing the established reputation, The School House has been nominated in 2015 the New Business of the Year in Windsor.

The School House believe that every child deserves a safe, warm and caring environment where they are respected, cared for and understood. This will help children grow and develop to their maximum potential. The School House is committed to fostering each child’s self-esteem and feelings of self-worth and value through positive care giving and stimulating activities that will promote their emotional, physical, social and intellectual growth and development.

Respecting the diversity of the community, The School House’s philosophy recognizes that children are unique individuals and are encouraged to learn about the uniqueness of others. Learn more by reading The School House inclusion policy.

Staff

The School House's staff is well-trained in understanding the developmental needs of children. Staff uses *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* as well as the CCEYA guidelines. Through these Guidelines we plan activities that facilitate learning through play and provide a balanced program that supports children's optimum development. The School House's non-discriminatory hiring practices create a team of staff from diverse backgrounds who support the families and communities we serve.

The staff in the Early Learning and Child Care Centres exceeds the Ministry of Education's requirements for Registered Early Childhood Educators. All The School House staff must have a valid Standard First Aid Certificate with Level C CPR, and have a Vulnerable Sector Criminal Reference Check. In addition, the following training programs are required:

- Health and Safety Essentials
- WHMIS
- Food Safety
- Cooked Food Safety Course

Volunteers and Students on Placement

In addition to having staff, The School House actively recruits more than volunteers and students on placement to work alongside staff to provide high quality care in programs. The School House volunteers are ECE Students who participate in programs relating to Children. Students on placement are from a variety of post-secondary programs, such as college and university early childhood education programs.

Volunteers and students directly enhance the quality of care provided to children. The children enjoy the additional attention they receive from volunteers and students and look forward to their visits.

Volunteers and students on placement never have unsupervised access to children in our programs and they are not responsible for the children. Volunteers and students at The School House are not counted in the staff-to-child ratio. Volunteers and students sign a statement indicating that they understand they will be supervised by The School House staff at all times.

A criminal record check, including vulnerable sector screening, is required for all volunteers and students on placement who work directly with children. The criminal record check must be valid within six months of starting with The School House.

For more details, please see The School House's Supervision of Volunteers and Students on Placement Policy.

Parents as Partners

We believe in strong, respectful and reciprocal relationships with our The School House families. These relationships start with regular discussions and connections with our program and office staff, whether in person or by other means (e.g., notes or emails, posting information on bulletin boards, The School House emails, social media updates).

Your knowledge about your child's learning strengths and preferences and day-to-day experiences is vitally important to success in The School House program. We are eager to hear from you about how to provide the best possible learning experience for your child, and how to work together in this important collaboration. Program staff will share information with you regularly.

You are welcome in your child's centre at any time, and you'll find there are special events throughout the year during program hours to which you will be specially invited.

There is also useful information on our websites.

www.theschoolhouseacademy.com For the Central location

www.theschoolhouseelc.com For the South location. You can always speak to your The School House Program Director at the school with any questions.

We also have a "Face Book" page for each Centre.

Centre Programs

The School House operates a variety of programs to meet child care needs. The School House currently operates: Infant, Preschool, Toddler and School age programs in our centres. As children reach the appropriate age to move into a new age group, they can move to the next level within the centre, when space becomes available.

The School House centres are licensed under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) through the Ministry of Education and are subject to the regulations established by the Government of Ontario.

Our curriculum approach

The School House embraces the document How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, as set out by the Ministry of Education for children up to eight years old. The four foundations within this document—belonging, well-being, engagement and expression—are embraced in The School House programs. Our program is also guided by the Ontario Early Learning Framework.

Our programs offer a highly engaging and interactive play-based environment that values children's learning. In our curriculum approach, we focus on creating and supporting caring relationships between children, adults and families. Our approach is based on an understanding of early childhood development and is focused on supporting children as they develop. We engage children in their learning through

exploration, play and inquiry. Communication and expression is honoured and celebrated to create a sense of inclusion and belonging.

The curriculum for The School House centres is based on the approach, where children develop important skills including language, pre-math and pre-reading skills. The development of this approach is based on long-term research that shows children learn best from active-learning experiences that they plan and carry out under the guidance of adult supervision. This gives children the best start prior to starting school. Through this active-learning process, children learn that they are capable, and that they are able to make decisions and solve problems about activities that are meaningful to them.

Neighborhood Walks

At times, under the supervision of The School House staff, children go on walks, visit parks and natural outdoor experiences near the school during program time. These walks provide a safe and stimulating outdoor play and learning experience for children. Children are supervised at all times.

At registration, you will be asked to give permission for these neighborhood walks.

Our approach to self-regulation and setting the stage for positive behavior

The early years set the foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, health and well-being. At The School House, we support the social and emotional development of children in our care by working as partners with families to promote, strengthen and develop children's positive behavior self-regulation and social skills.

All The School House staff receives training to better understand the stages of early childhood development, as well as positive approaches to behavior management. We use the latest research, resources and strategies to support children's attempts to regulate their behavior, emotions, attention and overall wellbeing. Ways we prevent conflicts using self-regulation and the learning environment include the following:

- Predictable routines
- Giving children choices about learning activities and during transitions
- Minimizing waiting times before getting started on activities
- Helping children identify and express their feelings
- Creating learning environments that promote self-regulation for children

The School House program staff use a positive structured process to support children with challenging behaviors. We understand that all behavior occurs for a reason. Once we identify the reason, we can use this information to develop strategies for success.

Our program staff uses the following six-step approach to resolving conflicts.

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.

- Staff place themselves between the children, on their level.

- They use a calm voice and gentle touch.
- They remain neutral, rather than taking sides.
- 2. Acknowledge children's feelings.
 - "You look really upset."
- 3. Gather information.
 - "What's happening? What's the problem?"
- 4. Restate the situation.
 - "So, what's happening is... So, the problem is..."
- 5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together with the children.
 - Staff engages with the children to develop child-initiated solutions.
 - "What can we do to solve this problem?"
- 6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.
 - Staff stays near the children.
 - "You worked out the issue together!"

We connect proactively with families through dialogue and open communication to resolve issues by working respectfully together. The School House endeavors to include all children in programs. For more information, please review The School House Inclusion Policy, The School House Access and Equity Policy.

Children enrolled in The School House centres are expected to demonstrate respectful and responsible attitudes towards other children, staff, and students on placement, equipment and facilities. Behavior guidance is facilitated in a positive and caring manner in order to ensure the fostering of each child's self-esteem. Minor behavioral issues are dealt with daily by staff. If a recurring behavioral issue arises, our staff will notify parents.

Prohibited Practices

- Corporal punishment in any form, of a child is prohibited.
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of safety and preventing the child from hurting himself, herself, or someone else, and is only used as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats, or use of derogatory language directed at, or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect dignity or self-worth.
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Infant Programs

Infants from six weeks to 18 months of age are involved in a variety of daily activities both indoors and outdoors. All children learn best through play and exploration. At this stage of development, infants require experiences that appeal to all the senses. Infants are offered a variety of art, music, sensory and language/literacy experiences each day. Infants choose their activities and spend time exploring independently with a caregiver, and in-group activities.

Each infant follows his or her own feeding schedule. Parents are welcome to send formula and/or breast milk labeled in baby bottles. The School House will also provide solid food and 2% milk when infants transition from formula or breast milk. A nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are prepared daily in accordance with Canada's Food Guide.

The School House has a Sleep Policy that is consistent with recommendations made in the Joint Statement on Safe Sleep. Direct visual checks of sleeping children are performed by staff constantly and documented every fifteen minutes during rest. The staff will document on the Daily Infant Sleep Check chart. Cribs and bedding are provided for napping. Special bedding and blankets are welcome from home and are properly stored. All diapers, diapering creams and baby wipes are provided by the parents of the child and labeled by parents.

Communication with our parents is very important for care of infants. We use a Daily Infant Chart, where parents let staff know about their child's night and any special instructions for the day. At pick up time, parents will be able to read about their child's naps, meals, diaper changes and observations of their child's interest and activities for the day.

Ratio: 1 staff to 3 infants

Toddler Programs

Toddlers from 18 to 30 months of age are involved in a variety of daily activities both indoors and outdoors. Toddlers' growing mobility means they are ready and able to explore even more of the world around them. Daily activities include music and movement, art, sensory, science and nature, language and listening. There are opportunities for dress up and role-play, climbing and riding. Each day, toddlers choose activities that interest them, and spend time playing both independently and in groups.

A nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are prepared daily in accordance with Canada's Food Guide.

Cots and bedding are provided every afternoon for a rest period. Special bedding, blankets and comfort items from home are to be labeled by parents and welcomed, The School House will make sure they are properly stored. All diapers, diapering

creams and baby wipes are provided by the parents of the child and labeled by parents.

At pick up time, parents will be able to read all about their child's naps, meals, diaper changes and observations of their child's interest and activities for the day on an individual daily chart.

Ratio: 1 staff to 5 toddlers.

Preschool Programs

Preschoolers from 2 ½ years to five years of age are involved in a variety of daily activities both indoors and outdoors. The daily schedule is structured to allow children the opportunity to plan their activity, carry them out, and then reflect on what they have done. Activities offered include art experiences, science and nature experiences, and computer activities. There is a large group time for music and movement, as well as a small group time focused on language and literacy, math and science.

A nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are prepared daily in accordance with Canada's Food Guide.

Cots and bedding are provided every afternoon for a rest period. Special bedding, blankets and comfort items from home are to be labeled and welcomed. The School House will make sure they are properly stored.

Ratio: 1 staff to 8 children.

Centre Closures

The centres will be closed on the following days:

New Year's Day

Family Day

Good Friday

Easter Monday

Victoria Day

Canada Day

Civic Holiday

Staff Recognition Day

Labour Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Boxing Day

December Holiday Closure

Fee Structure

Parent fees cover the expenses for children in the centre including breakfast, lunch and snacks, highchairs and cots for sleeping.

The School House will work with families to develop suitable payment arrangements. If assistance is required, please call The School House to discuss with the Owner/ Operator.

All fees paid to “The School House Academy” (Central location) OR “The School House Early Learning Centre”(South location) (including the administrative fee) are tax deductible. All registration and payment information is completed before your child begins care.

For assistance with online registration, please call the office at 519-972-1001 or 519-974-6222

Administrative fee

Families who register for The School House programs are required to pay a one-time, administrative fee. If a family cancels from the program and re-registers, they will be charged the administrative fee again.

Wait lists

As a result of our outstanding reputation and programs offered, there is sometimes a waiting list for some of the programs that The School House offers. The School House does not charge families who are placed on a wait list. A deposit will only be charged once your child’s registration is confirmed.

Monthly Payments

Monthly payments for children registered in programs are made through the Centres office. For invoices dates and amounts, please see The School House Supervisor if more information is needed.

Please note: An administrative fee will be charged for any payments that are returned with a notice of insufficient funds.

Cancellations

To ensure cost-effective operations and reasonable fees, it is essential for parents to give The School House the required two week’s notification in writing, to allow adequate time to fill vacancies. If you cancel a program or remove your child from a The School House program, The School House will provide you with cancellation verification by email.

Refund Requests

The School House will require a written request for the refund and a doctor's note prior to the refund being issued.

All requests will be processed as an adjustment to the next scheduled payment.

Refunds will not be issued for:

- Occasional absences by your child due to illness
- Administrative fees or deposits
- Cancellations from the program made with less than five (5) business days prior to your next payment
- Any absences due to vacations beyond one week, taken by your family during the school year (excluding Summer, March Break and Holiday Programs)

Vacations

Under certain circumstances, fees can be suspended by submitting vacation requests. In doing so, The School House will continue to hold space for the child.

Once per school year, requests for a one (1) week vacation

Fee Subsidy

The School House works with the City of Windsor, Children's Services Division to support families who need fee assistance. Families can apply for fee subsidy from the City of Windsor.

Important Information Child and Family Services Act

The Child and Family Services Act states that every person who has a reason to believe that a child is at risk has a legal obligation to report his or her suspicions immediately to the Children's Aid Society. The School House staff has a legal obligation to report any suspicions to the Children's Aid Society, and inform them about concerns, which might be confidential.

The School House staff is trained to spot signs of child abuse and neglect. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect abuse or neglect, staff is required to file a report. It will be the responsibility of the Children's Aid Society to investigate suspicions and evaluate the situation. Staff can be fined \$1,000 for failing to report a situation. The School House Child Care Services is committed to meeting the legal requirements of the Child and Family Services Act and to ensuring the safety and protection of each child in The School House programs.

Arrival and Prompt Pick-Up

Parents or guardians are required to personally drop-off and pick-up their children from the centre. Staff prior to parents leaving the premises must record arrival and departure of children.

The School House opens at 6:00 am and The Centres close at 6:00 p.m., so it is important that parents arrive prior, 10 minutes to 6:00 pm in order to gather their child's belongings and leave the centre on time. Parents are asked to arrange for another authorized adult to pick up their child if they will not be on time to do so. Parents who are late picking-up their child will be asked to sign a late pick-up book. If a parent is consistently late, they may be asked to find alternate child care.

Emergency Contacts

Parents will be asked to provide at least two local emergency contacts that can be reached in case parents cannot be reached, during an emergency. Only authorized adults will be permitted to pick-up children from The School House centres. Adults authorized to pick up children must show photo identification. Please ensure that the emergency contacts are aware of their responsibility and that their contact information is kept up-to-date.

Absenteeism

If a child will not be attending the centre, please notify the staff at the centre by 10 a.m. to avoid concern. You can call The Centre at (South) 519-972-1001 or (Central) 519-974-6222 and let the Supervisor know;

or as well as email:

(South) theschoolhouseelc@gmail.com or

(Central) theschoolhouseacademy@gmail.com

Inclement Weather

Severe weather conditions could result in the school boards closing the schools. Please listen to local radio AM 800 and Local television stations, check The School House website or follow The School House on Facebook for updates on school closures.

The School House is unable to operate the centres when schools are closed. The School House will make every effort to notify parents if centres are closed due to inclement weather. Do not bring children to the centre when schools are closed. Children spend time outdoors daily in the centres. The School House follows the guidelines developed by the CCEYA and Also City of Windsor Health Department during extreme weather conditions to keep children safe from serious adverse health effects, such as frostbite and sunburn. During the winter, children are kept indoors when temperatures outdoors reach -25 C with or without the wind chill. Staff exercise judgment and will adjust the amount of time spent outdoors during times of extreme cold or heat. During the warmer months when the UV index is high, staff provides drinking water, utilizes sunscreen lotion and shaded play areas to minimize exposure to UV rays. Parents are also encouraged to provide their children with protective clothing.

Food and Nuts

Due to health regulations and children's allergies, all food is prepared by staff, on the premises, for distribution to the children. (Nut free) Staff will provide children with a special treat to recognize birthdays in the centres.

The School House staff will not serve products that may contain nuts in any of the food that is prepared, or use nuts in any craft materials or activities. Parents are asked to ensure that children finish eating any foods consumed on the way to the centre, prior to entering the centre.

As much as possible, The School House staff ensures nut-free facilities, but cannot control all possible sources of nut contamination.

Medication

The School House staff will only administer prescribed medication that is in the original container. In accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) and The School House procedures, the medication must be affixed with the pharmacist's label indicating the name of the child, the medication prescribed, dosage and expiry date, as well as how the medication should be stored. In addition, parents must complete a The School House Action Plan for Medical/Health Condition form.

Supervisor Staff must receive training on administration procedures from parents if a child has an Epinephrine Auto-Injector (EpiPen). Parents will also be requested to complete the applicable authorization forms and provide the staff with new medication prior to expiry. A child who has been prescribed an EpiPen will not be admitted to the centre without a current (not expired) EpiPen. See The School House's Anaphylaxis Policy for more information.

Immunization Records

The Windsor Health Unit requires all families to complete an "Immunization Records Form for Children in Child Care Facilities." A copy of the child's immunization record must be attached to this document, and hand-delivered to the centre staff prior to the child's first day and after any updated immunizations are given. These documents are also forwarded to the Windsor Health Unit.

Illness

The School House centres are not equipped to provide care for children who are ill. Parents are asked to keep their children at home if they show symptoms of contagious illnesses. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and discharge from the eyes, skin rashes or itching, severe or croupy coughs.

Staff completes a daily health check in order to minimize the spreading of illness in the centres. Parents are asked to keep children at home for a minimum of 24 hours after symptoms have disappeared.

If a child becomes ill during the day, parents will be notified and asked to pick the child up. In some cases, a medical certificate may be required for re-admittance.

First Aid

Minor accidents and illnesses are common occurrences with children. All The School House staff has a valid Standard First Aid Certificate with level C CPR and will handle all minor cuts and/or bruises. More serious accidents or illnesses will be reported to parents immediately, and they will be requested to pick-up their child and seek medical attention if needed. If during program time, there is an emergency requiring immediate medical attention, The School House staff will call 911 and accompany the child to the hospital. Parents will be notified and requested to join the child and The School House staff at the hospital.

Serious Occurrences

The health, welfare and safety of all children in our care are our top priority. One of the ways we support children's wellbeing and safety is by complying with the Ministry of Education requirements regarding serious occurrences.

Complete details are available in The School House Serious Occurrence Policy, including a detailed definition and examples of serious occurrences. The policy also provides the detailed procedure that The School House staff follows if there is an occurrence, and the reporting process.

As required by Ministry of Education policy, whenever there is an occurrence (such as the injury of a child, allegation of abuse, missing child, disaster on the premises, complaint about service or about a child) we issue a report to the ministry. Following submission of the Serious Occurrence report to the ministry, The School House generates and posts a Serious Occurrence Notification Form beside our ministry license in the centre or program within 24 hours.

The Serious Occurrence Notification Form will remain posted at the centre for 10 business days. If there is further information, such as additional actions taken by The School House or the parent, this information will be added to the Serious Occurrence Notification Form after the initial posting, and the form will continue to be posted for a further 10 business days.

If the serious occurrence involves an investigation by the Children's Aid Society, the Serious Occurrence Notification Form will not be posted until CAS completes its investigation.

Please familiarize yourself with the detailed Serious Occurrence Policy for complete information about serious occurrence definitions and examples and reporting processes.

Safety and Security

The School House's number one priority is the safety and security of all children in the centres. Doors to the centres are locked at all times and parents will receive a personalized access code. Please do not hold the door open for someone who does not have an access code. Individuals without codes must ring the doorbell, so that

staff is aware of visitors to the centre. If someone without a code enters the centre with you, please alert the staff immediately. Only parents, and persons authorized by parents to drop off and pick up children, should have an access code.

The School House has a “hand-delivery” policy. When dropping children off at the centre, parents must ensure that they are greeted and children are delivered to staff for attendance. Children must be under direct supervision of a parent or staff member at all times while attendance is taken. Children should not be left unattended in vehicles, the main entrance or cubby area upon arrival or dismissal. Misuse of the doorbell interrupts programs and is a safety concern. If you must use the doorbell, please be patient, as staff are busy with the children and may not be able to open the door immediately.

Evacuation Site

In the event that children need to be evacuated from the centre, an alternate location has been selected. This information is available at the centre. Parents would be notified of the evacuation once the children are safely relocated. Parents should be familiar with the location of the evacuation site.

Appropriate Dress

For safety reasons children are required to wear shoes with closed heels and toes for outdoor play. Please ensure that children have appropriate clothing at the centre for daily outdoor play (coats, snowsuits, hats, boots, shoes, The School Houses mittens, sunhats, etc.). Please clearly label all items with the child’s first and last name. In addition, please provide a labeled change of clothing (pants, shirts, underwear, socks) for the child.

The School House Policies and Practices

The School House has developed a number of policies to ensure the safety and well-being of children registered in The School House Programs. As a The School House parent, you must be aware of The School House's rules and regulations. It is your obligation to remain informed of, and abide by, The School House policies and procedures. The School House reserves the right to amend or remove its policies, and to create new policies, and will keep you informed of changes. You can find a list of current policies [here](#).

Contacting The School House

If you have any questions about The School House’s programs and services, we have staff across the organization that can help. Please consult the table below for information on contacting The School House. You are encouraged to speak directly to your Supervisor with any questions or concerns. If your question is not answered, please contact The School House Head office and your question will be answered.

In situations that may require more support

I NEED TO:

- Report an absence
- Make alternate pickup arrangements
- Provide information about my child
- Get assistance for online registration
- Ask about billing or The School House programs
- Ask about available subsidies
- Get help with email communications from The School House
- Make payment and subsidy arrangements
- Statements of accounts
- Ask about The School House policies and procedures
- Ask about program operations
- Ask about volunteer opportunities at The School House

Please contact: The Supervisor or Administrator at:

Office phone: 519-972-1001(South location) or

Office phone: 519-974-6222 (Central location) or

email: theschoolhouseelc@gmail.com (South location) or

email: theschoolhouseacademy@gmail.com (Central location)

Positive self-expression, communication and self-regulation

At The School House, 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

The School House 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 School House aims to ensure that families have the support of available, affordable, safe, reliable, high quality licensed child care for their children, which ensures parents peace of mind while their children are in The School House 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 daily interaction with program staff, we offer many opportunities for parent feedback and involvement—such as surveys and focus groups. We use parent input to improve our programs and services.

Community partners

The School House is committed to involving local community partners and to engaging those partners in supporting The School House 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 community partners—individuals, organizations and agencies who support The School House children and families. 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 Christmas party.

Supporting staff in continuous professional learning

The School House is committed to hiring, training and fairly compensating staff. We hire staff that has 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.

The School House staff foster children's inquiry and creativity. Staff plans 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 plans for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.

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

At The School House, 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, creates 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.

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

Staff working in our centres 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 has completed a specific training program designed by The School House, and many have additional credentials in early childhood education, child and youth care or recreation and leisure. All program staff attends mandatory bi-monthly professional learning meetings and receives training on an ongoing basis.

Documenting and reviewing the impact of The School House learning program

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

Our staff makes daily observations of children in the program and uses this information to inform their future planning. Our intention is to move beyond reporting of children's behavior, 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