

Unity House Nursery School Inc.

Program Statement

The following program statement sets out how the philosophy of this school, as developed by the Director, and the How Does Learning Happen? protocol (HDLH?), set out by the Ministry of Education, combine to form a program that supports and encourages children learning and growing in a positive atmosphere. This statement is available to parents in combination with our Parent Handbook and is also posted on our website. Through training, discussion and observation, the Director ensures that the program statement and philosophy are implemented in all aspects of our program.

Our goal at Unity House Nursery School is to give children the encouragement and support needed to be their best self. Through positive learning experiences, children are encouraged to develop a positive sense of self, a love of learning and a respectful awareness of others. As stated in the HDLH? protocol “Early years programs play an important role in supporting children's learning, development, health and well-being.” We believe that children have a natural enthusiasm and curiosity and we strive to encourage this in each child. Given opportunities to explore, play and inquire, children succeed in building positive relationships with others and the world around them, and in developing a sense of how they can contribute.

To further this positive sense of self, Unity House also focuses on positive teacher/child interactions. This means that the children are treated in a positive, caring way; giving them a chance to learn, make mistakes, have the opportunity to correct and learn from mistakes and practice self-regulation.

It is our philosophy that each child is an individual in his or her own right; an individual who is competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. Each child and their individual uniqueness is entitled to respect and dignity at all times.

With the opportunity to develop and learn in an encouraging, supportive atmosphere that holds relationships among children, families, educators, and their environment in high regard, children have a chance to develop a positive self-image. This enables children to have respect for themselves and others and leads to the development of good citizens.

The “Positive Interactions Approach,” as opposed to the outdated notion of “behaviour management,” allows children the time and opportunity to review their actions and interactions with others. Encouragement and support from teachers can help the children learn appropriate behaviour. Even if a child is acting in a negative way, the interaction between the teacher and child can still be a positive learning experience.

“Through play and inquiry, young children practise ways of learning and interacting with the world around them that they will apply throughout their lives.” This direct quote from HDLH? summarizes the basis for the program at Unity House. Our school program is a play based learning environment, based on the belief that the building blocks of life are learned through positive play experiences. As children play, their social skills, self-help skills, as well as their cognitive and language skills are developed. When play using a variety of open ended materials and meaningful participation is encouraged, children have a chance to develop their innate curiosity and hone “academic” skills such as numeracy and literacy. With encouragement, the right materials, and an atmosphere that sees curiosity and exploration as a positive asset, children at play are able to use their natural curiosity and eagerness to learn and develop life long skills.

Built into our program are opportunities for indoor and outdoor play; ranging from activities that develop small motor coordination (i.e table toys), to large motor control (i.e.soccer), and many activities in between. There is time for both active and quiet pursuits throughout the day, as well as a built in rest period; this may be a nap or a 20 minute rest on a cot, depending on the age of the child.

Success throughout school and beyond is built on a solid foundation of problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, imagination, initiative and citizenship. All of these critical capacities can be attained and developed with the opportunity to explore and play in a positive, warm and encouraging atmosphere.

“Every child deserves to have someone's eyes light up when they enter a room.” This quote speaks directly to the idea that each child should have a sense of belonging and a feeling of connectedness in their world. Through positive and genuinely warm relationships with the children in our school, we can and should let each child know that he/she is valued for who they are.

At Unity House we understand that we are working with families, as experts on their own children, and that the children are capable and competent in their own right. Knowing this, we strive to provide the best experiences and outcomes for children, to allow them to have a secure footing on the four *Foundations for Learning* as noted in HDLH?. Those foundations are: belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.

Each child at Unity House is individually welcomed each day and through caring conversation and interaction with the teacher, they are able to feel they are an important member of our school community and that their well-being is important. This sense of belonging gives children the freedom and confidence to express themselves both verbally and physically and become truly engaged with their surroundings.

Of course, the first aspect of a quality childcare program is ensuring the health and safety of the children. Our school is arranged with the safety of the children as the first priority, with established procedures regarding cleaning, equipment use and arrangement, playground safety, fire drill practice and even teaching the children the rules about opening doors and gates and the procedure for using stairs in a safe manner.

We recognize that as well as safety, there are other aspects of good health, including good nutrition, fresh air and a balance of rest and exercise. At Unity House, outdoor time is highly valued and the children have opportunity for many pursuits; everything from sand box play to a rousing game of “What Time is it Mr. Wolf.”

Feeding the children good, healthy food and a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables is very important to the Director of Unity House. Our food is prepared in a “home cooked” way, served with the feeling that good healthy food is an integral part of raising healthy, happy children.

In summary, each child in our program should feel: connected to the other children and the teachers, that their sense of self is encouraged, and their health (physical, emotional and mental) is being nurtured. They should also be able to engage with and explore their surroundings and able to express themselves and their feelings, while knowing they are a valuable and accepted member of our school.

At the end of each day at Unity House, we want each child to feel good about who they are and where they spent their day.