SECTION:	Program
POLICY:	Program Statement
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Program Statement Policy

Our program statement describes how our programs support and foster early learning. It will outline our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development.

"Children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. They grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his or her surroundings and deserves the opportunity to succeed."
(How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years 2014 pg. 6)

View of the Child

SEC believes that children are strong, capable and competent. The program, environments and expectations of children reflect these views and are embedded throughout the curriculum, daily routines and flexibility in daily schedules. Children are provided with choices within the curriculum, the environment, and are encouraged to exercise autonomy and decision making throughout. Children are presented with real and appropriate challenging opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Children are active members of the classroom and encouraged to contribute in meaningful ways. We believe these together contribute to educators reflecting the view of the capable child and this assists children in developing a positive self-image as a strong capable child.

Promoting Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-Being

As a licensed and regulated child care operator, Social Enterprise for Canada (SEC) meets and exceeds all health and safety requirements of the Ministry of Education and Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA). SEC is committed to supporting the health, well-being and safety of all. Daily opportunities are provided that support children in developing self-help, self-care and self-regulation skills. Building on our view of the competent child, children are encouraged daily to take interest in self-care such as feeding, clothing and toileting needs with the support of an adult. This encourages children's developing sense of self, autonomy and supports emerging skills. The environment both indoors and outdoors offers children safe, yet reasonably challenging opportunities to assess risks and challenges as per their emerging capabilities. To support their sense of belonging, children are viewed as active members of the classrooms contributing to the environment, clean-up and maintenance of our space. Children exercise choice through an open snack which encourages them to determine time and quantity. Our Before and After School programs offer both a morning and an afternoon snack.

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Providing nutritious foods and beverages that incorporate family and cultural preferences and are in accordance with the Canada's Food Guide, including at least two snacks per day;
- Involving the children and families in menu choices;
- Providing experiences for children to engage in food preparation (e.g. baking activities);
- Being sensitive to and accommodating for children's food restrictions and allergies;
- Creating family-style, positive eating environments with foods and portion sizes that are responsive to children's cues of hunger and fullness;

- Ensuring that all staff members are trained and able to appropriately respond to health, safety and emergency situations;
- Engaging children in physical activity and decreasing the amount of time that is spent in sedentary activities;
- Providing opportunities for children to engage in risk at a level that is appropriate for their development;
- Supporting mental health wellness through encouraging children's development of self-regulation, resiliency and a rich emotional vocabulary;
- Providing opportunities and organization of materials to support children's growing autonomy and independence (e.g. snack time);
- Completing daily health checks through communication with families to understand the child's state of health entering the program and continually monitoring their health during their involvement in the program;
- Performing at least daily safety monitoring checks to ensure that indoor and outdoor environments are safe;
- Providing daily opportunities for sleep, rest or engagement in quiet activities depending on each individual child's needs and development;
- Coordinating with York Region Public Health to ensure that all health and safety procedures are in accordance with research-based best practices;
- Providing at least 30 minutes of time learning outside on a daily basis, weather permitting for our Before and After School Programs
- Monitoring children's engagement in activities to determine optimal periods for transitions;
- Providing a variety of indoor, outdoor, active, rest and quiet experiences throughout the day.

In addition, SEC has developed policies and procedures that support a culture of well-being which include,

- ✓ Supervision of Children
- ✓ Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures
- ✓ Menu Planning following the Canada Food Guide
- ✓ Communicable Disease Prevention
- ✓ Emergency Procedures
- ✓ Standard First Aid and Level C CPR training

Responsive, Supportive Interactions and Relationships

SEC is committed to building, facilitating and encouraging healthy positive and responsive relationships within our community. At SEC we view educators, families and children as curious, competent, capable and rich in potential and that families contribute invaluably to their children's learning and are their first teachers. We value collaboration and co-operation and believe that relationships begin with respect and open communication. Educators commit to developing a relationship with each child and to understand each child's unique way of expressing, communicating and learning. We value and actively take part in building relationships through ongoing communication, professional and family learning opportunities as each person is valued in contributing to this learning. Our community is strengthened with opportunities to connect socially through family engagement experiences planned to build relationships as a centre and through each of the classrooms. We also take a role in connecting to the local community through services like the library, local police and fire services, EarlyON programs, etc.

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Welcoming and greeting children and families at arrival;
- Providing opportunities for children to engage with and make contributions to the world around them;
- Promoting engaged citizenship through empowerment, empathy and advocacy;
- Supporting the development of a sense of community within the Centre or School and the community as a whole;

- Providing opportunities for children to be heard and for their contributions to be appreciated within their communities;
- Honouring children's ideas and contributions by responding to them in a respectful way and by focusing on using authentic language in our interactions with them;

Positive Interactions and Supporting Self Regulation

At SEC we believe that children deserve a positive environment that enriches the development of their social emotional well-being, to build their self-esteem and self-worth to ensure that they have the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation is the ability to control one's physical, behavioural, and mental impulses. Improving children's ability to self-regulate will improve life outcomes. (Self-Regulation video, Shanker) Self-regulation is how a child effectively and efficiently deals with, and recovers from stress.

"When the environment supports growing autonomy and independence, challenging behaviours are reduced and educators can focus more fully on observing, interacting and extending children's learning and development in meaningful ways." (Shanker, How Does Learning Happen? Pg. 21)

As educators we facilitate an environment that is welcoming to children and allows them to express their feelings and emotional needs. Building on the hundred languages of children, we believe that each child is unique and has a variety of ways to express themselves.

- ✓ Children actively engage in building, constructing and expressing learning in multiple ways.
- ✓ Educators commit to supporting children in communicating and expressing themselves in positive ways.
- ✓ Educators assist, support and scaffold children's developing self-regulation skills while promoting problem solving and assistance with solutions that are respectful of all.

"The better a child can stay calmly focused and alert, the better he integrates the diverse information coming from his different senses assimilates it and sequences his thoughts and actions." (Shanker, 2012)

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Interacting with children on their level;
- Actively play partnering with children to expand their learning and support their social experiences;
- Knowing when to be an intentional observer in a play scenario and to support these learning experiences from afar;
- Modeling resiliency and problem-solving skills with children and helping them to identify their feelings, the feelings of others, and possible solutions;
- Placing importance on encouraging children to develop authentic skills for solving problems, instead of having them take part in a prescribed solution (e.g. making a child say sorry);
- Getting to know the children on an individual basis to identify and work to proactively minimize stressors, and to help the children become self-aware;
- Actively listening to children and giving them the time and space to express themselves;
- Incorporating learning experiences for the children to engage in a range of group sizes;
- Responding to challenging behaviours with the most appropriate and effective but least intrusive strategy;
- Reframing challenging behaviours by reflecting on why they may be occurring and what the child might be trying to express;
- Acknowledging and positively reinforcing children's efforts in a meaningful way by being specific when describing actions and reactions;
- Encouraging children to be respectful of the ideas of others and modelling this ourselves;

- Talking about emotions and modeling empathy and self-regulation out loud for the children to hear.

Fostering Children's Exploration, Play and Inquiry

We believe that children are individuals with their own strengths, needs and rates of development. We believe that every child has the inherent right to develop to his or her full potential, developing their sense of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. Through play children will explore, experience, inquire and problem-solve. SEC follows an emergent philosophy which means it is a child-centred, child-directed, developmentally appropriate program where activities are based on the interests and passions of the children and is supported by knowledgeable educators. Children thrive and learn best when their interests are captured and learning occurs naturally. We believe that this can only occur in a safe, stimulating, respectful, bias free, inclusive and loving environment. The environments are designed with thoughtful provocations and invitations for learning by educators that assist, support and are co-learners with children.

"Children thrive in indoor and outdoor spaces that invite them to investigate, imagine, think, create, solve problems and make meaning from their experiences – especially when the spaces contain interesting, complex, open-ended materials that children can use in many ways." (HDLH, pg. 20)

We believe that children need opportunity to exercise choice in a carefully planned day that is flexible and responsive to their needs. Children develop skills appropriate to their stage of development through structured and unstructured exploration, both large and small group experiences as well as active and quiet play choices that occur both indoors and outdoors.

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Observing and engaging with children to understand their questions and inquiries and using these as a guide for programming;
- Respecting and supporting the children's sense of curiosity and wonder;
- Viewing the environment as the "third teacher" and understanding the significant impact it has on our program;
- Organizing the learning environments in a way that makes them aesthetically appealing, uncluttered, engaging and welcoming;
- Incorporating materials that add to a homelike feeling within the learning environments (e.g. curtains, plants, lamps, natural lighting, soft colours, pillows, real materials);
- Providing interesting and complex open-ended learning materials for children to engage with and explore;
- Including real items (e.g. dishes, lamps, glass jars) for children to use and explore in their play;
- Providing natural elements (e.g. sticks, rocks, shells, plants) to help children explore the natural world;
- Role modeling and encouraging respect for materials in the shared learning environment;
- Providing opportunities for extended and uninterrupted play and exploration multiple times each day;
- Providing a variety of learning experiences and materials for children to freely choose to play and express themselves with;
- Engaging with children during their exploration, play and inquiry to support and extend their meaning making of their experiences;
- Engaging in open-ended conversations with children and asking thought-provoking questions to help expand the children's learning and our understanding of their explorations;
- Having an awareness of the many languages that children use to express themselves and providing opportunities for children to share their thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways;
- Reviewing documentation of learning experiences with the children in order to encourage their reflection on their learning;

- Capitalizing on spontaneous, meaningful learning moments during the day by being actively engaged with the children;
- Creating learning environments that mirror the ideas, values, attitudes and cultures of those who use the space;

Fostering Engagement and Communication with Parents

We believe that an environment that welcomes families, inviting their perspectives and providing opportunities to participate in meaningful ways, fosters engagement and ongoing communication creating a sense of belonging. We recognize that families are an important contributor in a child's life and relationships matter.

Educators communicate on a daily basis with families about their child's day. Information is shared both formally and informally through dialogue, documentations, observations, newsletters, parent meetings etc. Families are also invited to share experiences, traditions and skills to support our program.

"Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults and the world around them." (HDLH pg. 26)

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Communicating with families on a daily in-person basis at minimum at arrival and departure;
- Communicating our perspective of the children's learning and development with families both in person and posted on documentation boards;
- Encouraging families to share their perspective on the children's learning and development through in-person sharing;
- Encouraging families to share pictures and stories of their child's time at home and with family;
- Displaying family information and photographs throughout the learning environments;
- Incorporating aspects from a variety of cultures within the learning environment (e.g. food, music, art, photographs, artifacts);
- Inviting family participation within the daily program and encouraging them to share their varied perspectives and cultural experiences with the children;
- Creating a comfortable place in each learning environment for families to stay and visit whenever possible;
- Encouraging parent participation and engagement through Parent Advisory Meetings;
- Planning special events and social activities for families to engage in throughout the year (e.g. celebrations, holiday gatherings, family open houses).

Engaging Community Partners

SEC envisions a community that exemplifies Canadian values, where all people realize their full potential and have the opportunity to belong in, and contribute to, a prosperous and inclusive society. Involving the local community assists Educators in better meeting the children and family's needs. Meaningful experiences support the child and families by making connections in their community. Educators will also provide connections to agencies including, but not limited to, York Region Speech and Language, Early Intervention, Police and Fire Services, libraries, Ontario Early Years Centres.

"Early Years settings can play a key role in promoting the visibility, inclusion and active participation of young children in society." (HDLH pg. 19)

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Involving local community partners in children's explorations and inquiries where possible to enhance learning opportunities
- Connecting families with local community partners for additional support and services;

Continuous Professional Learning

SEC supports, values and appreciates the continuous learning of the staff. Staff are provided with opportunities to attend workshops, updated and trained on curriculum and policy changes as this yields personal growth, greater job satisfaction and higher quality programing. Professional Development opportunities are in keeping with SEC standards and the College of Early Childhood Education and individual professional learning.

"Educators are competent and capable, curious and rich in experience. They are knowledgeable, caring, reflective, and resourceful professionals…Educators are life-long learners. They take responsibility for their own learning and make decisions about ways to integrate knowledge from theory, research, their own experience and their understanding of the individual children and families they work with. Every educator should feel he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor, and deserves the opportunity to engage in meaningful work." (HDLH pg. 7)

The Staff will support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, such as:

- Our Registered Early Childhood Educators (R.E.C.E.) will maintain their registration with the College of Early Childhood Educators
- All Staff will be trained in health and safety protocols as well as Standard First Aid with Level C Infant and Child CPR;

Our Use of Documentation

Our programs use a variety of documentation methods to share in the joy of children's learning and development, support our communication with parents, reflect on our planning and creation of environments and experiences, review the impact of our interaction and planning approaches, and to support and monitor the implementation of our program statement. Documentation will highlight the children's thoughts and contributions, share our professional knowledge and includes representation of the children's, educators' and families' perspectives. They are intended to share a broader picture of what is happening in each learning environment on a regular basis. Within each playroom, more individually and long-term focused documentation pieces are also created and shared with families. These documentation pieces reflect the children, families and educators in each individual learning space and will take on a variety of formats, including individual learning stories, group reflections, storybooks, and documentation panels.

Program Statement Review

This Program Statement will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is in alignment with SEC Policy and Procedures, How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014) and the CCEYA. Our Program Statement is a document that staff, students and volunteers will review prior to working with children, on an annual basis or any time there is substantive changes to the program statement. A sign off sheet signed by the staff, student, or volunteer and the person who led the review indicating the date of orientation will be kept.