Program Statements and Goals

Date Established: March 2023

Date Updated: April 2026

The program offered by Heart at the Door Daycare Inc. reflects research, theory, and practice and is consistent with Ministry of Education policies, pedagogy, and curriculum.

Our educators use *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* to guide their practice. *How Does Learning Happen?* is a professional learning resource guide — provided by the Ministry of Education. It is about learning through relationships for those working with young children and families. How Does Learning Happen? is intended to support pedagogy and curriculum/program development in Heart at the Door's program.

As we continue to explore curriculum and advance our leadership, we reference the following ministry documents:

- How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
- Ontario Early Years Framework
- Think Feel Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children
- Early Learning for Every Child Today

Pedagogy is "the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that support the understanding of learning". Curriculum (the content of learning) and pedagogy (how learning happens) in early years settings are shaped by views about children, the role of educators and families, and relationships among them. *How Does Learning Happen?* helps Heart at the Door educators "focus on these interrelationships in the context of early years environments."

Our View of the Child

Our team views children of all ages as capable, competent, curious, and rich in potential.

- Capable: We believe that children can engage in informed risk-taking and increasing independence within appropriate environments.
- Competent: We know that children are able to question, examine, and investigate a wide variety of topics and areas of interest.
- Curious: We value children's sense of wonder and recognize that they learn valuable skills through play.
- Rich in Potential: Children come with lived experience and knowledge and are, along with educators, co-learners in our program.

We recognize and provide individualized support for each child as they grow and develop at their own pace, supporting them to reach their full potential.

PROGRAM FOUNDATION

How Does Learning Happen? speaks to four foundations that are important for children to grow and develop to reach their full potential. The four foundations inform the goals of Heart at the Door Daycare's program.

1. Belonging means that children will have a sense of connectedness to others, an individual's experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others, and making contributions as part of a group, a community, and the natural world.
2. Well-being addresses the importance of physical and mental health and wellness. It encompasses areas such as self-care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills.

3. Engagement suggests that children are engaged by the opportunity to explore the world around them with their natural curiosity and exuberance. Through play and inquiry, they develop skills such as problem-solving, creative thinking, and innovating, which are essential for future learning and success. It is important that children are encouraged to initiate experiences as well as participate in them.
4. Every child is a capable communicator who expresses themselves in many ways. Children are supported to be heard and to listen to others through words, body language, and the use of materials. Children will be provided with opportunities (time, space, and materials) to encourage expression and communication. They will be engaged in authentic and reciprocal communications with educators.

Pedagogical Approaches Explained

Our educators use recognized pedagogical approaches to support children's learning and development. These approaches are explained below and apply to many of the goals listed in the next section.

Responsive relationships

A responsive relationship is one that creates and builds a sense of trust and a healthy sense of self, and encourages self-regulation. This relationship is developed between the child, their family, and the Registered Early Childhood Educator.

Learning through exploration, play, and inquiry

Educators build upon the children's interests by providing materials for exploration.

Educators assist children in seeking answers to their questions.

Hands-on play is the foundation of learning and development.

Children initiate an interest in a specific topic. Educators support learning through scaffolding, research, investigation (field study), and reflection.

Educators plan a curriculum that engages children in a more thorough investigation of their areas of interest.

Educators as co-learners

Educators go beyond giving answers or asking questions they already know the answer to. They become a partner, a co-researcher — learning along with the children through inquiry and exploration.

Environment as a third teacher

The environment is inclusive, accessible, and reflects the diversity of the children, families, and the community. The child's environment is set up with open-ended materials that can be manipulated, investigated, and provide exploration through the five senses.

The environment allows for child-initiated exploration and play

Pedagogical documentation

A visible record of what the children and educators have been researching and investigating through the curriculum.

Allows for reflection, questioning, and discussion on a specified topic of interest

It reflects developmental growth over a period of time.

Approaches used to Achieve Goals

The following goals and pedagogical approaches outline how our program supports children's learning and development and describe the approaches we use to achieve these goals, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's policy statement

Goal 1: Promote the Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-being of Children

Objectives

What you might see:

- Educators greet families and children warmly each day, asking about their child's mood, health, or any recent events, to support a smooth transition.
- Attendance is carefully tracked, with times recorded for each child's arrival and departure.
- At pick-up, educators make eye contact with parents, ensuring authorized individuals pick up the children by checking photo IDs when necessary.
- Educators provide daily updates or learning stories to parents about their child's day, sharing highlights and observations.
- Staff engage directly with children, fostering a sense of belonging and connection.
- Safety discussions are integrated into activities, helping children understand and follow safety rules.
- Sick children are monitored, and parents are notified promptly when early pick-up is required. Notifications are also shared with families about confirmed illnesses in the center.
- Medication brought into the center is logged, checked for consistency with instructions, and administered according to policy.
- Menus are posted, and changes are noted. Snacks and meals are served daily, with educators modeling healthy eating habits and encouraging children to try new foods.
- Allergy lists are visible in the kitchen and classrooms to ensure the safety of all children.

What we do:

- Toys and equipment are sanitized regularly to prevent the spread of germs.
- Educators follow safe sleep and supervision practices in accordance with Ministry guidelines
- Daily health checks are conducted and reviewed for trends. Public Health is consulted if outbreaks occur, with additional cleaning measures implemented as needed.
- All staff are certified in First Aid/CPR and epi-pen use. Emergency plans for allergies or chronic conditions, such as diabetes, are reviewed and followed with appropriate training.
- Seasonal menus follow Canada's Food Guide, with accommodations for allergies, beliefs, and dietary restrictions.
- Safe food handling certifications are required for all food preparation staff.
- Safety policies are reviewed annually, and staff participate in additional training for fire safety, WHMIS, and other relevant areas. Emergency drills are practiced with the children.

Goal 2: Support Positive and Responsive Interactions Among Children, Parents, Child-care Providers, and Staff.

Objectives

What you might see:

- Parents are regularly invited to participate in the program as observers, volunteers, or contributors to learning activities.
- Educators respect families as the first teachers of their children, honoring their values and beliefs in daily interactions.
- Incidents requiring support for children are shared privately and respectfully with parents.

- Educators actively listen to children, supporting their need to self-regulate while offering guidance to develop this skill.
- Staff provide parents with resources or advice on child development topics, such as potty training, in a supportive manner aligned with family goals.

What we do:

- Host family events, such as seasonal picnics, Mother's Day Tea, and cultural celebrations, to foster connections.
- Engage children in creating gifts for family members during holidays and special occasions.
- All communication regarding children and families is handled by a confidential and respectful manner.

Goal 3: Encourage Children to Interact and Communicate in a Positive Way and Support their Ability to Self-Regulate.

Objectives

What you might see:

- Educators model positive interactions and guide children to express themselves respectfully.
- Conflict resolution strategies are introduced, helping children navigate social challenges and build empathy.
- Quiet spaces are available for children who need time to self-regulate.

What we do:

- Provide age-appropriate activities that encourage collaboration, such as group games and problem-solving tasks.
- Implement daily routines that help children anticipate transitions and develop self-regulation.

Goal 4: Foster Children's Exploration, Play, and Inquiry

Objectives

What you might see:

- Classrooms rich with open-ended materials that inspire creativity and curiosity.
- Children actively explore materials and environments, asking questions, and engaging in hands-on activities.
- Educators facilitate discovery by asking open-ended questions and documenting children's learning processes.

What we do:

- Design learning environments that reflect the children's interests and developmental stages.
- Plan provocations and inquiry-based projects inspired by children's natural curiosities.

Goal 5: Provide Child-Initiated and Adult-Supported Experiences

Objectives

What you might see:

- Children choosing activities that align with their interests, with educators available to extend learning through conversation and guidance.
- Educators scaffolding children's ideas by introducing new materials or posing challenges to deepen engagement.

What we do:

- Observe children's play to identify emerging interests and incorporate these into the curriculum.

- Balance free play with guided activities that build on children's developmental goals.

Goal 6: Plan Positive, Inclusive Learning Environments Supporting All Children

Objectives

What you might see:

- Spaces designed to be accessible and welcoming, with materials reflecting diverse cultures and abilities.
- Educators adapting activities to suit the needs of individual children, including those with individualized plans.

What we do:

- Collaborate with resource consultants and families to develop inclusive practices.
- Regularly review and update individualized plans to ensure all children are supported.

Goal 7: Incorporate Indoor and Outdoor Play, Active Play, Rest, and Quiet Time

Objectives:

What you might see:

- A balance of active and quiet activities throughout the day.
- Outdoor playtimes where children explore, climb, and run, fostering physical development.
- Quiet areas for rest or solitary play to meet individual needs.

What we do:

- Schedule the day to include varied activities, ensuring children have opportunities for movement, creativity, and relaxation.
- Provide comfortable, quiet spaces for children to rest or recharge.
- Ensure children receive daily outdoor play in accordance with the Ministry requirements, weather permitting.

Goal 8: Foster Parent Engagement and Communication

Objectives

What you might see:

- Parents are welcomed into the center and provided with regular updates about their child's experiences.
- Newsletters, social media updates, and informal conversations keep parents informed and engaged.

What we do:

- Use multiple channels to communicate with families, including newsletters, emails, text, social media (in accordance with privacy and consent policies), and face-to-face interactions.
- Encourage parents to provide feedback and participate in the program evaluation process.

Goal 9: Involve Local Community Partners

Objectives

What you might see:

- Visits from community helpers, such as firefighters, police officers, or librarians, enriching the children's learning experiences.
- Children participating in community walks or field trips to explore their surroundings.

What we do:

- Partner with local organizations to bring resources and expertise into the program.
- Share information about community events and campaigns with families.

Goal 10: Support Staff Professional Learning

Objectives

What you might see:

- Educators attending workshops, conferences, and training sessions to enhance their skills.
- Staff sharing new insights or resources with colleagues and families.

What we do:

- Allocate funds for professional development and ongoing learning opportunities.
- Hold regular team meetings to reflect on practices and discuss program improvements.

Goal 11: Document and Review Impact

Objectives

- Program Evaluation:
  - Parents participate in ongoing and annual surveys to provide feedback on the program.
  - Educators document and review children's learning experiences, using observations to inform curriculum planning.
  - Regular program reviews ensure the center meets the evolving needs of children and families.

Prohibited Practices

In accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, Heart at the Door Daycare does not permit the use of any prohibited practices.

Prohibited practices include:

- corporal punishment of the child;
- 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 preventing a child from hurting themselves or others and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- locking the exits of the child care centre or confining a child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of emergency management policies and procedures;
- use of harsh or degrading measures, threats, or derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine their 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.

These practices are strictly prohibited under all circumstances**.**

Annual Review

- Per the Ministry's direction, Heart at the Door shall ensure that all new employees, students and volunteers review this Program Statement upon hire or before their placement begins. Additionally, all employees, students, and volunteers will review this Program Statement annually, and after any modifications.