

Dear Families,

Here at Minnow Lake/New Sudbury (MLNS) we believe and follow the practice of “How Does Learning Happen: Ontario’s Pedagogy for Early Years”. We are licensed by the Ministry of Education and follow the guidelines and requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act. We base our practice on the 4 foundations in our Early Learning facility: Belonging, Engagement, Expression, and Well-Being.

Belonging:

We want you and your little ones to feel “at home” and comfortable at Preschool.

We want you as parents and caregivers to share your thoughts and ideas to help make learning fun and engaging for your child. If you know your child is particularly interested in a certain area, we invite your input because it helps us to plan environments that will engage the children and provide them with meaningful experiences.

Example:

Avy’s parents mentioned that she was so excited to go camping, but there was so much snow left, that they wouldn’t be going for a few weeks yet. We brought in a small tent, sleeping bags, and a cooler. We made our very own campsite indoors! We made a campfire out of paper towel rolls and tissue paper. Soon we were cutting out pretend fish, and having a fish fry and cooking s’mores on our pretend campfire. The kids’ imaginations went wild. We read stories inside our tent, and packed picnics in our cooler. All the children were engaged and had their own great ideas during our “camping days”.

Being a cooperative Nursery School, your voice and opinions help to make our program successful. We have monthly meetings for parents and educators to come together to discuss any concerns, present ideas, and to share stories about what’s been happening in the program. We encourage parents input, as we realize it is you that knows your child best, and if we work together, we can help your child to reach their fullest potential.

Don’t worry if you miss a meeting. The minutes are recorded and documented, and all parents/caregivers will be sent a copy so everyone is up to date. We also have a closed Facebook group, which allows those involved in the program to communicate, share, and reflect on all things pertaining to the Nursery School.

We live in a diverse world and understand that we all have many beliefs, values, and come from different cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities. We encourage you to share your culture and family experiences with us. It is a wonderful opportunity for us all to learn and celebrate our uniqueness.

Example:

We had a family from another country. The child spoke very little English, but learned very quickly and even taught us all a few new words!

One day we had a dancer come to teach the children a traditional dance from this little boy's country. The kids and some of the parents were so fortunate to learn a little more about this family's heritage through the music, dancing, and traditional clothing. It was a wonderful moment for us all, and the family demonstrated such pride and happiness during this lovely experience.

We believe that community is an important component to your child's early learning experience. We work with community partners such as Child and Community Resources, and the City of Sudbury to ensure parents, caregivers, and educators are given the support when needed, and to ensure we are meeting all the standards of a quality program.

We want your child to not only feel they belong in the classroom, but to feel a sense of belonging within their community. They will be given the opportunity to explore parts of the city. Various field trips are planned throughout the year. Some examples are:

- Visit to the local fire hall
- Visit to the grocery store
- Storytime at the Library
- Visit to a local farm
- Visit to a Seniors Home

We also invite community members to visit our classroom; such as, the dental hygienist, firefighter, policeman, and music teacher. It is also a special treat when parents, family members, and caregivers share their special talents with the children.

Example:

We had a father who is a soccer coach come in and run a mini soccer clinic with the kids.

Another dad came in around the Christmas season and played his guitar and sang carols with the kids!

Expression

The daily program gives your children the opportunity to express themselves in many ways, either through play, music, art, creative stories, physical activities, and social interactions.

Throughout the morning's activities, kids will be kids and indeed find themselves in "sticky" situations; whether it be, fighting over a toy, feeling left out, or just "having one of those days". We believe that children are competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential (HDLH, p 6); therefore, they sometimes need a moment to self-regulate. We will be there to support the child's communication efforts and assist by modeling and/or coaching more positive approaches when needed.

We believe that by providing a safe, friendly, and positive environments, children, families, and educators are encouraged to communicate openly together. As parents and caregivers working with the children, we would like you to feel confident and supported in your interactions with the kids and staff always. We encourage reflective practice for staff and families, to ensure we are learning from our experiences and providing quality care, interactions, and opportunities for your lil' ones.

Engagement

Your kids just want to have fun when they come to school. We will provide them with many natural and open-ended play materials to give them their own initiated play experience. Staff will document what interests the children to reflect on ways to provide fun and meaningful activities, interest areas, and experiences. We will be there to support, encourage, and engage them through these everyday adventures.

Example:

Nolan was pretending to be a pirate on the slide and was telling his friends to climb aboard. Staff acknowledged the interest and asked him "what else do pirates do?"

"They go on Treasure Hunts" he replied.

Staff asked the kids what they could use as treasures. The kids went looking around the class to find bracelets and tiaras from the dress up bin, some blocks that looked like diamonds, and craft material to be the jewels. One of the kids then hid all the treasures while the others closed their eyes. Soon we were all on a grand treasure hunt. One little girl then said we needed telescopes, so we spent the next 20 minutes making telescopes from paper towel rolls and stickers.

Staff then played the "Raiders of the Lost Ark" theme song, and all the kids joined in, seeking treasure and watching out for crocodiles and quick sand.

Our Pirate Treasure Hunt lasted most of the morning and has now become a common adventure in the classroom!

Well-Being

As a parent or caregiver in a cooperative Nursery School, we encourage continuous professional learning; either through, videos, reading materials, and workshops to promote the overall well-being of the children in the program. You can also be assured that our educators are qualified and are RECE's (Registered Early Childhood Educators) or approved by the Ministry and in the process of obtaining a diploma in Early Childhood Education Program and intend on registering with the College of ECE. RECE's must abide by a Code of Ethics and Standard of Practice and are required to keep up to date on current childcare practices by attending professional development courses, workshops, and by referring to the Ministry of Education resources, such as, "How Does learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years", and "ELECT: Early Learning for Every Child Today". These resources are also available to families online or in the classroom.

We want your children to grow up happy, safe and free to explore their natural curiosities. We realize your children are still little and require extra attention; however, we also see them as confident and capable; therefore, we will encourage them to explore and practice safe risk taking. We will be there every step of the way as they test their limits, and reach new goals.

Example:

The toddlers are so unsure about climbing the ladder to the slide. We as staff and caregivers will stay close and encourage each child to try one step at a time, offering a hand or positive reinforcement when needed. They will soon gain confidence and coordination and they'll be climbing with ease in no time!

This program is unique in the fact that we only run in the mornings and do not have a designated outdoor space; however, we do try and incorporate some form of physical activity each morning. Let's be realistic, little ones have an abundance of energy and need a chance to release it!

Freeze tag, red light-green light, or balloon toss are a few examples of how we burn some energy. Sometimes a good ol' dance party is the best way to get some sillies out!

Just as it is important to burn energy, there are times a little down time is needed. Story time, action songs, finger plays, and sensory bins are some of our favorite ways to incorporate a small rest or quiet moment throughout a very busy morning.

Your little ones will also need to refuel. A nutritious snack will be provided mid-morning to ensure your child has the chance to feed their hungry bellies. They may be inspired to try new foods and to practice good manners. We also want to encourage independence by allowing them to make choices, serve themselves, and help around snack time by clearing the table and putting things away in the proper spot. Snack time is also a wonderful time to gather and engage in conversation, share stories, and learn something new.

In conclusion

Our Nursery School is a warm, nurturing, and fun environment that promotes each child's development, well-being, and sense of belonging. By basing our practices on the 4 Foundations of the "How Does Learning Happen" pedagogy, we believe helps to foster and nurture a wonderful Early Learning Environment for your young one. The adventures they experience here will be a stepping-stone, and make for a smoother transition into the Kindergarten Program.

Some important links:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/ExcerptsFromELECT.pdf>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/howlearninghappens.pdf>