

Andrew Fleck Children's Services Forest Explorers Program Statement

415 Corkstown Road Ottawa, Ontario K2S 1Y9

Phone: 613-736-5355 Ext 356

E-mail: forestexplorers@afchildrensservices.ca

Website: www.afchildrensservices.ca

The land on which Ottawa Forest and Nature School operates is the traditional and unceded land of the Algonquin Nation. We are grateful to be offering Forest and Nature School learning and play on this land, inspired by those that go before us. As part of our work towards Truth and Reconciliation, we commit to acknowledge and respect the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people as stewards of the land on which we play, learn and live

Our program statement confirms our program goals and Approaches as we plan and create positive early learning experiences that support the learning and development of the children attending our program.

Our Early Childhood Educators team plan the environment to guide the children's learning while meeting individual developmental needs, ensuring that children and families have a sense of **belonging, well-being, engagement and expression**. These are the four Foundations identified in 'How Does Learning Happen?' Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years.

For more information regarding 'How Does Learning Happen?' please see the following website <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

1. **To promote the health, safety, and well-being of the children, we:**

- emphasis on play!
- Encourage adventurous and risky play so children build competence and awareness of their strengths
- assess for hazards and danger
- promote opportunities for the children to learn how to be able to self-regulate
- provide calm areas are provided in each room and calming/self-regulation tools are taught daily
- Our programming is Child-led and inquiry base
- Educators act as co-learners rather than facilitators

2. **To promote responsibility for self and others by encouraging the children to interact and communicate in a positive manner and support their ability to self-regulate and support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff.**

- Our priority is the emotional and physical well-being of all children in our care.
- Developing relationships of mutual respect and trust that are positive, responsive, and nurturing is of paramount importance.
- We support the children to communicate in different forms (verbal and non-verbal) and create and maintain a language rich environment
- Educators get down to the child's level, use active listening skills and valuing the

child's input.

- The use of visuals within our program assists the children
- Only forms of positive behaviour guidance with emphasis on discussion, encouragement and positive reinforcement are used by all staff.
- We partner with parents to assist children in being successful in all interactions.
- Educators respond empathically to all children and try to identify and decrease the stressors that a child may be feeling.
- When children are having a difficult time, we may redirect to another activity or a calm down area where the child can use self-regulating equipment
- All staff work within the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics as put forth by the College of ECE and the AFCS 'Statements of Practice and Guiding Principles.'

3. To create environments that foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry and plan for positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported ensuring that both child-initiated and adult-supported experiences are available.

- When designing our environments;
 - Educators are co-planners with the children.
 - Supporting children's decision making.
 - Supporting inquiry base learning.
 - Supporting curiosity and risk taking.
- Educators are actively engaged in the play with children;
 - Provide opportunities for the children to ask questions.
 - Solve problems, test and revise.
 - Communicate their theories.
- We are purposefully curious rather than acting as the expert;
 - Focus on what the child is 'doing' rather than the object they are using.
 - Determine what it is they are trying to understand and what they are investigating.
- All children are a part of the planning process; sharing ideas and activities that are of interest to them.
- We use thought provoking questions; how, why questions, to explore cause & affect with children.
- We support and encourage children's choice and follow their lead/interest.
- Value their voice.
- We support the children's inquiries by providing enough materials so that there is a sufficient amount for all.
- The materials are able to be rotated and are easily accessible.
- Children can move freely from one play area to another.
- Materials are open ended 'loose parts' and support the children's investigation.
- Support the learning and development of each child.
- Educators and children work together to expand on investigations.
- We complete and post Pedagogical Documentation, which is shared with children and families through different mediums:

- Pictures.
- Written observations.
- Identifying the ongoing learning that is occurring.
- Videos, audio recordings etc.
- We understand that the Environment is the 'third teacher';
 - We develop environments for children to thrive in.
 - That invites them to investigate, imagine, think, create, solve problems, and make meaning from their experiences.
 - Support children's growing autonomy and independence.
- At Forest Explorers we encourage a fluid schedule that is based off;
 - Children's moods.
 - Interests and abilities.
 - We consider the weather and environment when planning out the days schedule (example: eating lunch outside on nice days and not going as far on a walk if the snow is super deep).
- At different times throughout the year there maybe interests /inquiries that are occurring when a child may want to share their own items from home these are kept to a minimum. We encourage the sharing of these items based upon the inquiry taking place and support items being brought into the Centre as long as they are reflective of the learning and inquiry that is occurring.

Please note that we cannot be held responsible for lost or damaged items and items must be restricted to non-violent, cooperative type toys.

4. To offer flexible, responsive programming which incorporates indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care.

- Respecting that each child will have their own unique skills and attributes; which we foster and nurture by having the children contribute to their learning
- We are committed to establishing natural outdoor play spaces that support the development of sensory, motor and cognitive skills in all children and are active outdoor participants with the children in exploring the environment.
- We encourage the children to explore and take risks, ensuring that we are assessing all risks
- As described in 'How Does Learning Happen? research suggests that allowing children to actively explore and investigate what they are naturally curious about, to test their limits, take manageable risks appropriate for their age and abilities, and engage in creative problem-solving is critical for children's physical and mental health and well-being.'
- The Ministry of Education requires children who are in care for 6 hours or longer to have at least 2 hours (AM & PM) of outdoor play daily, weather permitting. (We consider humidex and wind chill temperatures, as well as UV index and air quality) We strive to spend most of our time outdoors.
- Quiet rest time is important for children's health and ability to develop self-regulation

skills. There will be a 1-hour rest period and the children may sleep up to 2 hours if needed.

- For children that do not require a “nap” they will have quiet time on their cot with books and quiet activities
- Each child will be assigned their own crib/cot /mat and it will be labelled with their name. All cots/ mats are disinfected weekly.
- Staff performs visual checks on all children periodically throughout rest time and these are documented in the daily log book.
- Children can bring in a small pillow, blanket, and a cuddly toy from home for this period. We will have you sign a permission form to authorize using a pillow.
- To ensure the safety of the children, ratios are maintained at all times during outdoor play and during the day, excluding sleep time for 1 hour and up to 2 hours during periods of arrival and departure of children, which is at a 2/3 ratios.

5. **To build supportive partnerships with children and families; fostering the engagement of ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.**

- Families play an integral part in their child’s learning and one of the guiding principles at Andrew Fleck Children’s Services is engaging families as partners in their child’s early learning.
 - Our program has an open-door approach for families, and they are welcome to visit at any time during program hours.
 - We provide an orientation period for all new children and families to ensure a positive and engaged integration period and to support our families to gain a better understanding of the program.
 - Integration Period
 - A transition plan will be developed in collaboration with the family and the Educator
 - It is a time for you to meet with your child’s primary Educator to review your child and family history.
 - During this time, Educators will provide regular verbal updates regarding your child. Please feel free to discuss any questions or feedback you may have with a staff member at any time.
 - Educators are part of a team, however, a Primary RECE is assigned to each new family. Information will be provided to parents about day to day events.
 - Each child will adapt at their own speed and some children may need their family member staying for a little while each day to offer encouragement and security.
 - Please plan on spending a few minutes in the morning to settle your child before leaving for the day. Always check in with a staff member in the morning and remember to say goodbye to your child and reassure them that you will be back.
 - Educators are available for meetings during the year to share the learning

that is occurring.

- We value that parents/guardians are their child's primary caregiver, and we are committed to a mutually respectful relationship with all families and welcome your questions at any time.
- We utilize an on-line tool called StoryPark;
 - This provides an overview of the children's learning that invites families to appreciate the events of the day and encourages interactions and engages them in their child's learning.
 - All parents will sign an agreement of understanding for the use of Storypark, which is included in the registration process. To learn more, you can go to www.storypark.com.
- We urge parents/guardians to keep informed of Centre activities and news by reading the Centre newsletters as well as notices posted on our parent bulletin boards and the Storypark Community page.

6. To involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff.

- Encouraging and developing community partnerships strengthens our abilities to meet the needs of all our children and families. Any community resources will be posted on our parent board
- We go on daily adventures to already established places throughout the forest; some examples include:
 - Rocky-moss-place 1 & 2,
 - Party mix, the magic tree
 - Rocky red.
 - We also find joy in finding newly discovered areas like the "magic pond"
- We would also stay in contact with the recreation program and make new partnerships with the equestrian and farm
- Visitors (some of them being parents) serving the community are invited on an ongoing basis-
 - Elders and knowledge keepers
 - the fireman
 - the policeman (forest safety)
 - CHEO, Outdoor play Canada, Algonquin college
 - paramedics
 - military officers
 - Wesley Clover parks

7. To support continuous professional learning.

- Our Early Childhood Educators value lifelong learning and commit themselves to engaging in continuous professional learning to enhance their practice.
- The staff continually take advantage of workshops, courses and other opportunities in order to upgrade their skills and develop new areas of expertise.
- Our team is very committed to the welfare and development of children, and is

always available for consultation, information, and resources.

- As per the regulations set forth in the Child Care and Early Years Act, we must document and review our strategies to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the children and families within our care. To meet this requirement, we will:
 - Develop and circulate an annual parent survey, to all parents whose children are enrolled in our program.
 - Registered Early Childhood Educators will solicit feedback at parent / teacher meetings held twice per year.
 - Bi-annually at Program Team meetings, strategies will be reviewed and documented by the program staff.
- All staff, supply staff, students and volunteers are expected to review the program statement prior to interacting with the children and again annually
- All AFCS programs share a philosophy that supports the right of every child and family to expect and receive the highest quality of child care that we can offer.

On behalf of Andrew Fleck Children's Services, we welcome you and your child to the Forest Explorers and appreciate that you have chosen our program for your child. Should you ever have any questions please feel free to contact Tammy Potter, the Program Supervisor at tpotter@afchildrensservices.ca or Lisa Belton, Director of Early Learning at lblton@afchildrensservices.ca