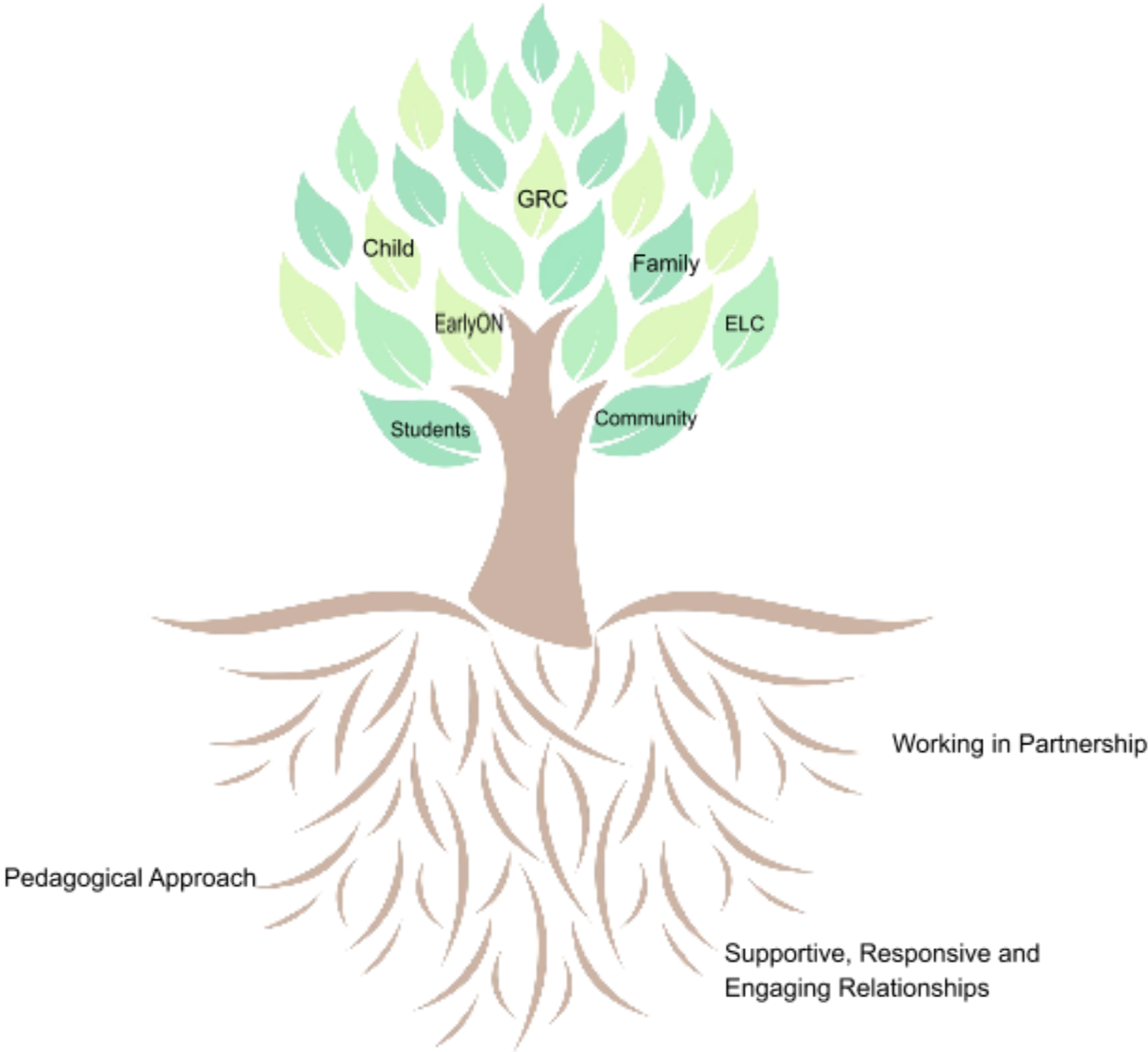


**Ryerson University**  
**Early Learning Centre & Gerrard Resource Centre**  
**Program Statement**



## **Our Image of the Children, Childhoods, & Family**

Ryerson University Programs: Early Learning Centre (ELC), and Gerrard Resource Centre (GRC) centres provide an exemplary early learning model and child care service to families. As laboratory schools, we support pre-service early childhood learning, teaching and research initiatives. Our centres encompass a community of children and adults living and learning together. As a Rights Respecting Program, central to our values are the following beliefs and practices:

- **Families are an integral support and decision maker for their children.** In keeping with our philosophy of equity, diversity and inclusion, we respect and acknowledge each family's culture, values and unique needs. As Early Childhood Educators, we foster respect for the children's families, their cultural identity, language and values (UNCRC, Article 29 (1.c)). We are committed to providing a responsive program for families while being accountable to our governing policies while embracing the Family Support Principles (Families Canada, 2018).
- **Families are the most important influence in their children's lives.** We strive to establish partnerships with families to strengthen our ability to meet their children's needs, to understand their personal contexts for learning, to enhance our program and to create an inclusive environment for all members (UNCRC, Article 14 (1,2)).
- **Each child is an individual and a member of the community.** We recognize and appreciate that children have an innate curiosity and a determination to understand the world around them; children are competent, capable, and curious beings who have a right to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people (UNCRC, Article 29 (1.d)).
- **Each child has unique ideas and perspectives, and ways of reflecting and sharing them with others.** By understanding the child, we promote the development of social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth. Children have the right to express themselves freely and we provide opportunities for children to seek, receive and impart information through a variety of mediums including print, orally, art and media (UNCRC Article 13 (1)).
- **Each child has the right to participate fully in their home, community and Early Learning program.** We promote this inclusive practice through ongoing interactions, observations and reflection, to examine the main

inquiries that children are exploring about their world. As co-investigators with the children, their families and community, we collaboratively create a supportive environment to foster this participation (UNCRC, Article 23 (1)).

- **Play is the child’s primary medium of learning, which promotes problem-solving, decision making, and positive interactions with others.** Children benefit from both indoor and outdoor environments where they can rest and leisure, explore cultural life, the arts, nature, and take safe risks (UNCRC, Article 31 (1)).
- **All children, family members, students, staff, and faculty should be regarded and valued as unique individuals.** In partnership with the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University, we offer opportunities to share these values through ongoing collaborative projects, interactions and student placements. We take partnership in preparing children and students for a responsible life in a free society by understanding peace, tolerance, equality, inclusion and diversity (UNCRC, Article 29 (1, d)). The terms equality, diversity and inclusion are used in their broadest sense to include linguistic, cultural and racial identity as well as ability, gender, class, sexuality, age and migration status. Our approach recognizes children’s need to develop a positive identity, not only as individuals but also as members of the groups to which they belong. Families, children, students and registered early childhood educators are welcome to share aspects of their culture and ethnic identity (UNCRC, Article 30).
- **Creating responsive and positive interactions between and among adults and children promotes opportunities to practice self-regulation and socially responsible attributes.** We encourage leadership behaviour in young children by providing opportunities for social learning through modeling and peer training. Children have the capacity to develop and enhance their sense of responsibility, empathy towards others and environmental stewardship (UNCRC, Article 29 (1, e)).
- **Well-being, engagement, expression and belonging are embedded within all aspects of a high quality Early Learning Program.** These four pillars of the Ontario Ministry of Education document *How Does Learning Happen?* are interdependent and work together to offer a foundation of learning and engagement. As our program is licensed by the Ontario Ministry of Education, we uphold Ministry guidelines as indicated by the Child Care and Early Years Act.

The intent of this program statement is to identify and celebrate the day-to-day interactions that take place at Ryerson University's Early Learning Programs. With the guidance of the provincial documents *How Does Learning Happen?*, and *Think, Feel, Act*, we embrace the foundational pillars of *How Does Learning Happen?* and expand on these values by embracing four of our own critical foundations to ensure that we honour, respect and achieve the ideological approach espoused in this document.

Four critical components comprise the framework that guides our work with children and families.

- 1) Pedagogical Approach**
- 2) Supportive, Responsive and Engaging Relationships**
- 3) Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-being**
- 4) Integral Role of Partnerships**

## Ryerson University Early Learning Framework: Pedagogical Approach

Ryerson University's early learning programs are sites for innovation and research. We value our work with families and the community and strive to create a stimulating and engaging environment for the children that fosters children's exploration, play and inquiry<sup>1</sup>. We view our roles as observers, co-learners, and listeners. Given our comprehensive understanding of early learning and care, we regularly engage in observations of and dialogues with children. Their ideas are integrated into our program to ensure we are responsive and inclusive. Our programming is an Environmental Approach that includes child-directed inquiries, projects, and indoor and outdoor learning experiences. Our day to day practices support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, RECEs and staff<sup>2</sup>.

### Day-to-Day Practice

#### **Our innovative pedagogical approach fosters children's play, inquiry and exploration through:**

- Daily observations and documentations to support program direction and scaffolding of the children's interests. Daily observations foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with families about their children and the program<sup>3</sup>.
- Daily program planning, reflection and documentation of children's learning offer time to plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported<sup>4</sup>. Individual Program Plans are implemented to support children who require modification to the program with the support and comments from families.
- Children choose activities to set-up in the classroom, for example, art, cognitive and sensory experiences.
- Posted program plans, observation maps and weekly diaries showcase children's play, inquiry and exploration.
- Field trips, picnics, and community walks that are connected to the children's inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> 3(d) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

<sup>2</sup> 3(b) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Center Licensing Manual

<sup>3</sup> 3(h) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Center Licensing Manual

<sup>4</sup> 3(f) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

- Environmental design promotes independence, inquiry and social engagement. The environment fosters children's regulation between family-led, educator-led, small group, child-initiated and adult supported experiences<sup>5</sup>.
- Daily routines and extra time during transitions meet the children's needs and interests.
- Ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators, staff and families to support professional growth and community collaboration.
- Regular staff meetings that promote information sharing, team building and policy proficiency.

**ELC also offers...**

- Weekly diaries reflect what has been observed, documented and explored by the children.
- Planned enrichment programs (e.g. nutrition sessions, music lessons and physical fitness activities)
- Individual monthly stories for each child highlighting their strengths, interests and next steps.
- Developmental screening tools are completed bi-annually to inform families of their child's strengths, needs and next steps.
- Individual program plans are completed in collaboration with families for children requiring modifications or accommodations within the program.
- Planned classroom socials (4-5 times per year) to provide opportunities for family networking and connections.
- Planned indoor and outdoor experiences, active play and rest of quiet time are imbedded into the daily plans and give consideration to the individual needs of the children<sup>6</sup>.
- Individual children's needs are evident to all staff and are posted in each classroom, and notes communicated by families are recorded in the daily log book.
- Outdoor experiences are not limited to our natural playground. We also make use of alternative spaces on Ryerson campus such as gardens, the water scapes of the Quad. As these respect the values of taking safe risks. During inclement weather, we use indoor campus spaces (e.g. gym, hallway and dance studios)

**GRC EarlyON also offers...**

- Daily planning sessions to reflect and document children's learning, complete program plans and mapping of ideas.
- Family and caregivers are active participants in the program and have the opportunity to record observations and reflect on inquiry.
- Attendance is flexible and voluntary

<sup>5</sup> 3(e) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Center Licensing Manual

<sup>6</sup> 3(g) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Center Licensing Manual

## **Ryerson University Early Learning Framework: Supportive, Responsive and Engaging Relationships**

Our aim is to establish supportive, responsive, and engaging relationships with families to strengthen our ability to offer high quality early learning and care for the children.

We strive to create a safe, supportive, and positive climate where everyone is respected. To build a sense of belonging, all members of our community are encouraged to contribute, share, and receive information. We build trusting relationships through responsive interactions among the children, families, early childhood educators, staff and, students. We value engaged interactions and provide consistent daily routines that support children's self-regulation and developmental growth.

### **Day-to-Day Practice**

**Supportive, responsive and engaging relationships are visible in the following ways:**

- Families are invited to participate in program activities and events.
- The educators plan community initiatives such as neighbourhood walks, family socials and events.
- Established policies and procedures outline clear expectations about our program and pedagogical practices for staff to read annually.
- RECEs and families meet to discuss the child's strengths, interests and next steps.
- Families are provided with community resources through conversations, email, Resource Board, Family Resource Binder, community collaboration and referrals.
- Family meetings with an RECE discuss the strengths, needs and expectations of our program of their children.
- Opportunities for researchers, guest speakers and volunteers to participate in the program with the consent from staff, families and assent from the children.
- Ongoing communication fosters engagement with families about their children and the program<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> 3(h) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

- Outdoor experiences are not limited to our natural playground; we also make use of alternative space on Ryerson Campus such as gardens, water scapes and the Quad. As these respect the values of taking safe risks. During inclement weather, we utilize indoor campus space (i.e.) gym, hallway, dance studio.
- Policies are reviewed/revised yearly by management, RECEs and staff.
- Policies are followed to ensure our approach reflects the rights of the children and that our interactions are positive and engaging.
- Policies promoting positive interactions include:
  - Civility Policy
  - Behaviour Guidance /self-regulation Policy
  - Maintaining Confidentiality Policy
  - Parents issues and complaints Policy
  - Social Media Policy

#### **ELC also offers...**

- Families are invited to participate in program evaluation, complete feedback surveys and join the Family Advisory Committee.
- Orientation week provided to new families that offer a slow transition into the program.
- Individual children's needs are evident to all staff and are posted in each classroom, updates provided by families are recorded in our daily log book.
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#### **GRC EarlyON also offers...**

- Provide opportunities for families to contribute to and participate in workshops, program planning, evaluations, and fundraising.



## **Ryerson University Early Learning Framework: Health, Safety, Nutrition and Well-being**

We promote the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children, families, early childhood educators, staff and students. Our daily routine creates predictability and consistency for children and families and offers a balance of indoor and outdoor play, large, small and individual activities, and an afternoon rest period (if applicable). In addition to indoor and outdoor play, we offer opportunities for active play, rest, and quiet time as this gives consideration to the individual needs of the children.<sup>8</sup> Our nutritious snacks and lunch follow the Canadian Health Food Guide in addition to catering to the children's dietary restrictions and intolerances.

The success of our programs is demonstrated by the engagement of children, family, educators, students and the community. Children confirm our approach is successful when their interests, skills, and sense of well-being continue to evolve. Our program approach adds to the success of children's overall health and well-being.

### **Day-to-Day Practice**

**The health and well-being of our participants are reflected in the following ways:**

- RECEs and staff are CPR and First Aid certified.
- At least two staff members holds a Food Handler Safety certification.
- During meal times, educators provoke conversations about food choices that encourage healthy eating habits.<sup>9</sup>
- Predictable and consistent routines offer familiarity for children and families'.
- Indoor and outdoor planned activities promote health, physical movement, and nutrition.
- All policies and procedures are reviewed and updated annually and include:
  - Anaphylactic policy
  - Emergency Medical policy
  - Emergency Evacuation policy
  - Health policy
  - Immunizations policy
  - Sanitary practices
  - Lost child policy

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<sup>8</sup> 3(g) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

<sup>9</sup> 3(a) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

- Playground safety policy
- Safety plan policy
- Serious Occurrence policy
- Toy washing policy
- Transition policy
- Family workshops, resource sharing, and referrals are provided.

**ELC also offers...**

- Dietician-approved nutritious lunch and snacks.
- Program cell phones are with RECEs and staff during outdoor time, community walks and when transitioning from one location to another.
- Health and Safety Committee provides monthly environmental inspections for hazards and required repairs.
- Daily sleep checks are conducted and documented
- Daily well being checks are conducted and recorded in the communication book when a child is portraying atypical health.
- Resource consultation is available for workshops, resource information and modeling to support children with identified needs and/or disabilities.

**GRC & EarlyON also offers...**

- Healthy snacks offered
- Planning and implementing health promotion events and services.
- Providing a space where parents/caregivers can interact with other adults
- Resource consultants are available to support licensed child care by providing workshops, resource information, referrals, assessments and program planning for children with identified needs and/or disabilities.

## Ryerson University Early Learning Framework: Working in Partnership

Ryerson Early Learning programs are composed of a team of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) who have a wealth of experience in developmental learning. They respect the rights of the child, are caring, reflective, and resourceful professionals who are accountable to Families, Ryerson University, the College of Early Childhood Educators, Ministry of Education, Public Health, and the City of Toronto Children Services.

We collaborate with external professionals to create an engaging, responsive and inclusive environment and we encourage these partners to support the children, families and staff.<sup>10</sup> We take responsibility for our lifelong learning through collaboration with community partners and participation in ongoing professional learning opportunities to ensure we remain current and continue to meet the needs of the children.<sup>11</sup> We participate in research initiatives to uphold our Lab Centre's important role in knowledge generation and learning. We provide mentorship and assist students during their field placement experiences while encouraging innovative inquiry and projects with the children, students, RECEs and staff. Our partnerships with community partners, educational institutions, and provincial stakeholders ensure we maintain high standards of practice and leadership in the field of early learning, care and family supports.

1. Document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and their families (3 (k) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual).
- 2.

### Day-to-Day Practice

#### Our Laboratory programs work in partnership by:

- Mentoring Ryerson University field education placement students.
- Presenting projects and inquiry to Early Childhood Studies classes.
- Supporting student learning, through observations, interviews and in-class presentations.
- Presenting at conferences and workshops.
- Offering tours to other Early learning programs, conferences participants, and international students.
- Presenting updates at School Council meetings.

<sup>10</sup> 3 (i) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

<sup>11</sup> 3 (j) in subsection 5.2 of Child Care Centre Licensing Manual

- Holding monthly team meetings.
- Collaborating with Ryerson University and other academic institutions to participate in research.
- Attending local community early learning workshops.
- Collaborating with Special Needs Resource Services for training, modeling, and sharing of strategies to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.
- Accessing funding and charitable donations for equipment and materials.
- Completing professional Learning portfolios as directed by the College of Early Childhood Education.
- Collaborating with public health services to provide families with resource information and free services.
- Complying with Ministry of Education licensing guidelines and expectations.
- Partnering with the City of Toronto to access subsidy and funding to offer a variety of programs to families and children (e.g., child care subsidy, Special Needs Resourcing and EarlyON Child and Family Centre).
- Participating in City of Toronto networking meetings and working groups.
- Inviting families as guest speakers to share their talents and interests with the children.
- Connecting with the local emergency services to offer tours and request presentations for the children, RECEs, and staff (e.g., fire safety presentation).
- Connecting with the community to raise funds for charitable causes such as, the Coldest Night of the Year walk and Emergency/Respite care.
- Utilizing the local library and community garden as an extension of learning.
- Offering transition to school information nights for families and attend transition meetings as requested by the school and family.
- Offering information sessions to families about the Centre's curriculum goals and placement student's expectations.
- Presenting and organizing parenting workshops.
- Partnering with Ryerson University departments to provide childminding during conferences and congress.
- Initiate developmental screening tools with families such as Nippissing Screening tool or the Ages and Stages
- Participate in community resource fairs

### **Quality Assurance**

Ryerson University's early learning programs have a responsibility to evaluate, review, reflect and modify the programs to ensure they continue to align with current research and meet the needs of the community. The program statement objectives are reviewed and revised annually, through feedback from parent survey, staff meetings, and the family advisory committees.

