



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Early ON

Child and Family Centre

Where children from 0 to 6 and their families learn, grow, and connect, together.



Participant Handbook

EarlyON is an Ottawa-Carleton District School Board program and is generously funded and supported by:

Ontario 

 Ottawa





Vision Statement:

To be leaders in the field of Early Learning, ensuring that every child, family, caregiver and educator has access to caring, innovative and socially responsible OCDSB early years environments;

Mission Statement:

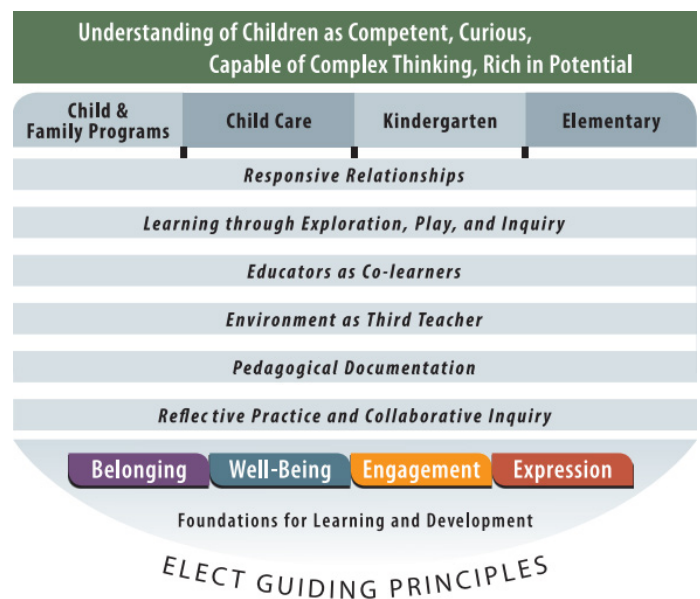
To support a culture of lifelong learning, in collaboration with school and community partners, through safe, inclusive, diverse, and evolving early years programs that foster the unique potential of every child and their caring adults.

Welcome to the OCDSB EarlyON Child and Family Centres

All Are Welcome Here: All Ontario families and caregivers with children from birth to age six are welcome at an OCDSB EarlyON drop-in playgroup. The EarlyON team strives to provide a warm and nurturing environment that reflects families and the diverse needs of the community. The centres provide safe and predictable early learning environments which foster adult-child engagement and children’s development in collaboration with the broader early years community. Each program follows a flexible daily schedule to support children and families with age-appropriate routines and responsive programming, strengthening home-school relationships as well as supporting the continuum of learning. The program is guided by the provincial early years pedagogy *How Does Learning Happen?* and focuses on learning and development through relationships; particularly cultivating relationships between children, families and educators to develop a sense of belonging, well being, engagement and expression.



How Does Learning Happen, Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, pg. 8



How Does Learning Happen, Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, pg. 14

The Ministry of Education has identified three mandatory core services to be available to children and families across Ontario. OCDSB EarlyON Child and Family Centres intentionally create spaces that deliver these services by contributing to learning and development, support and engagement, and making connections and referrals.

Supporting Early Learning and Development

OCDSB EarlyON Centres operate high quality, inquiry based drop-in playgroups staffed by qualified Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and Early Years Professionals that promote optimal child development, encourage children’s exploration and build responsive adult-child relationships. There is a shared view of children, parents and caregivers as competent, capable, curious, and rich in experiences.

Engaging Parents and Caregivers


OCDSB EarlyON Centres offer conversations, observations and inquiries in small groups or individual formats to enhance parents’ and caregivers’ well-being and support them in their role as the child’s first teacher. There is a shared view that program facilitators are co-learners and work in partnership alongside children, their families and their community.

Making Connections for Families

OCDSB EarlyON Centres make introductions between families, provide current multilingual resources, maintain relationships with varied community agencies to provide detailed knowledge of community services, and provide support while accessing such services, including warm handoffs when necessary. There is a shared view that supporting families within their community is most effective.



Supporting Early Learning and Development

What participants can expect from the program	 What we expect from the participants
<p>A child and family centred environment to engage young children and their families in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play and inquiry.</p> <p>Age appropriate and culturally responsive early learning activities, including sensory, art, building and construction, and dramatic play areas that reflect the interests and developmental stages of the children.</p> <p>Regular access to the school gym and high quality equipment.</p> <p>Opportunity for outdoor and nature-based play and exploration.</p> <p>Flexible routines and limited transitions for young learners.</p> <p>Using pedagogical documentation to make learning visible.</p>	<p>Parent and caregiver cooperation is essential to the success of the program. Please remain close to your children in all settings to support their interests, play and social interactions.</p> <p>Parents and caregivers help their children to tidy up between activities. This helps children to understand that tidying up is part of the play process while simultaneously supporting early literacy and early math skills such as visual recognition and sorting.</p>
<p>A daily gathering with age appropriate stories, fingerplays, games, music and movement based on children’s interests to support early literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Access to a variety of children’s books in multiple languages and reflective of the community it serves.</p>	<p>Be close to your children to enjoy this time together. Adult floor seating is available.</p> <p>Consider singing along and joining in the actions to support your child’s early literacy.</p> <p>Model active listening skills during storytelling and singing to show your children how it is done. Not only will this support their learning, but it is also an important skill for school. There are plenty of opportunities during play to connect with other adults.</p> <p>If your child is not interested in the stories and song segment of the day, please feel free to play quietly elsewhere in the room. Children can join in whenever they choose or listen from afar.</p>

The Program Facilitator prepares and offers an optional light morning snack that aligns with Canada's Food Guide and supports children's own hunger cues.

Child sized bowls, utensils and tumblers are provided for food and water to support independent and interdependent eating skills.

Support hand hygiene practices by washing hands before and after snack.

Ensure children are supervised and seated when eating.

Adults clean off tables after their child finishes their snack.

Families are welcome to bring their own snack, but do not bring snacks containing peanuts or other nuts.

In order to support children with allergies or special dietary restrictions, please do not offer food to children outside of your care.

This program is delivered in the English language. Families are invited to speak their first language during play to support their culture and identity and to build a strong language base for their children.

Parents/caregivers remain on-site and are responsible at all times for the care and supervision of every child they bring to the program. Never leave your child(ren) unattended in any space including the hallway, washroom, gym or the centre. Should you need to leave the programming space, please ask for support from another participant. EarlyON staff cannot be responsible in your absence.

Licensed and unlicensed home childcare providers are required to follow and maintain ratios, as defined in the Ontario legislation by the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA)*. As well, they are required to adhere to their agency's program goals, supervision and behaviour guidance guidelines, to support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, and staff. EarlyON Program Facilitators are obligated to report CCEYA violations and appropriate care concerns to the Ministry of Education.

[Duty to Report](#) Section 125 of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA)* imposes a duty for everyone, including RECEs and Early Years professionals, to report suspicions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and risk of harm to a children's aid society.



Engaging Parents and Caregivers

What participants can expect from the program	 What we encourage from the participants
<p>An environment that welcomes all families and invites their perspectives, providing opportunities for caring adults to participate in meaningful ways.</p>	<p>Caring adults are invited to share their program ideas and perspectives, as well as their goals for attending the program.</p>
<p>An inclusive environment that is supportive of varying parenting experiences, while role modeling a positive parenting approach to support children and families.</p> <p>Promotion of a non-judgmental space to practice new skills.</p>	<p>Caring adults are invited to discuss their parenting values and concerns and to practice new skills.</p> <p>Should you have any concerns about a child that is not under your care when in our programs, please do not approach the child directly but speak either to the adult accompanying the child or the Program Facilitator in the centre.</p> <p>When your child requires guidance or redirection, please respond by moving close to your child to support them.</p>
<p>Respectful conversations with parents/ caregivers based on observations, positive parenting approaches and the latest early years research to support them in their role.</p>	<p>Caring adults are invited to engage in respectful conversations with staff and other participants to support them in their role.</p>
<p>Reflective practice and open and restorative communication to resolve issues and concerns with all levels of program staff.</p>	<p>Caring adults are invited to share their thoughts on successes and challenges encountered in the centre through conversations, email and surveys.</p>
<p>Access to parent education materials and resources; ongoing staff professional development to provide early years research to support parents and families.</p>	<p>Caring adults are invited to browse our collection of materials and resources, both in print and online, as well as to ask about staff training/professional development.</p>

Child, Parent/Caregiver and Staff Code of Conduct: The OCDSB strives to provide a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment for all. Children, parents/caregivers and staff are asked to adhere to the Respectful Workplace and School District Code of Conduct policies.

Respectful Workplace: OCDSB employees have a right to feel safe in their places of work. Bullying, harassment, foul language, threats, or any disrespectful behaviour towards the staff will not be tolerated and you will be asked to immediately leave the program. View our [Respectful Workplace](#) policy for more information.

Injury Reports: Program Facilitators share injury reports with their team manager and school principals as needed; they must report injuries to the Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange (OSBIE) as appropriate. Additionally, they are responsible for reporting serious occurrences to the City of Ottawa.


Code of Conduct: Our [School District Code of Conduct](#) outlines expected standards of behaviour for all people in the OCDSB Community in support of positive and respectful learning and working environments that enable students to reach their full potential.

We reserve the right to refuse access to the EarlyON program when OCDSB policies or procedures or EarlyON program guidelines or expectations are disregarded.

Your feedback is important to us. If you have any questions or would like to provide a comment, compliment or critique, please email us at earlyon@ocdsb.ca



Making Connections for Families

What participants can expect from the program	 What we encourage from the participants
Knowledgeable staff that are aware of community agencies and services to help parents make informed decisions that are best for their family. Confidentiality when discussing family needs and concerns.*	Caring adults are invited to ask for support when seeking community services, and to share their knowledge and experiences of services in the area.
Responsive staff that can facilitate introductions between participants.	Caring adults are invited to introduce themselves and their children to other participants to build connections, and to share resources and information with each other.
Inviting and welcoming community visitors and supporting agencies into the program space to support families.	Caring adults are invited to share their ideas and thoughts about community visitors.
Outreach and outreach events for new families to ensure equitable access to child and family programming.	Children and adults are invited to help to make new families feel welcome in the centre.
<p>*Confidentiality: Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff and placement students, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children’s Aid Society).</p>	



Planning Your Visit

Entry: Our EarlyON centres are located inside public elementary schools and are subject to [OCDSB Safe School Policies and Procedures](#). Main school doors are locked during program hours, and community members will be given access by school staff. Designated entry/exit doors have been established for each program location.

Vehicle and Stroller Parking: Many of our schools have limited parking lot spaces. Please follow the parking directions for each school. There is designated outdoor stroller parking at each school location. Stroller parking is not permitted inside any OCDSB school. Do not block bus pick-up or drop-off areas, nor any sidewalks or doors. OCDSB is not responsible for lost or stolen property. You may want to consider a lock for your stroller.

Shared Space: The school is an active place; we share space with students, staff, parents and community members. For your safety and the safety of others, please stay together when entering and exiting the school. Please respect office staff and classes in session by walking quietly through the hallways together. If you need support with this, our Program Facilitators are happy to help when possible.

Illness: Please do not attend an EarlyON Centre if you or your child is unwell. If your child is too ill to be at school or daycare or to fully participate in the activities, they are too ill to be at an EarlyON Centre. Program Facilitators may refuse entry and/or ask you to end your visit early if you have symptoms and/or your symptoms of illness worsen during your visit.

Program Schedule: Programs operate for 3.5 hours daily from morning to early afternoon, Monday through Friday during the school year. You and your children may drop in at any time during the drop-in hours and stay for as long as you wish within those hours. Each school location has similar programming with a daily schedule but activity times may vary between sites. Transitions are limited to support young learners. We are closed on school holidays and PA Days. Visit the EarlyON website for daily drop-in hours and speak with the Program Facilitator to help determine the best time of day to visit to meet your needs.

Registration and Attendance: Upon your first visit to an OCDSB EarlyON Centre, you will be asked to complete registration forms. The information obtained remains confidential and is collected for statistical purposes by the City of Ottawa and the Ministry of Education. Program Facilitators will be happy to assist you. Additional attendance requirements may be implemented at each school.

Capacity: Each EarlyON Centre has a maximum number of visitors determined by the Ottawa Fire Department. When the maximum occupancy has been met, a "FULL" sign will be posted at the designated entry door. If this is your very first time visiting the EarlyON Centre, please proceed to the classroom. If you have visited before and see the "FULL" sign upon arrival, please come back at a later time in the day or plan on visiting another day. Program Facilitators can share with you when programs may be quieter. For the well-being of all participants, capacity limits may change. To ensure that all community families have an equitable opportunity to access their local EarlyON centre, we reserve the right to limit participants' weekly attendance.

Emergency Drills: As part of a school, we participate in regularly scheduled and unscheduled emergency drills such as fire, lockdown, evacuation and secure school practices. For safety reasons, if you are in attendance during such times, you may not leave until the drill is completed. You will not gain access to the school during these drills. Follow all instructions from the Program Facilitator during emergency drills and incidents. View our [Safe Schools Policy](#) (Emergency Preparedness and Response) for more information.

Safe Digital Spaces: All members of the OCDSB Community shall refrain from recording, taking, or sharing non-consensual recordings or photos of other members of the OCDSB community. You are welcome to take photographs of children in your care at play. For privacy, video recording is strictly prohibited during the program. View our [Appropriate Use of Technology](#) policy for more information.

Media Consent: Program Facilitators will provide parents with a media consent form for images of their children to be displayed within the classroom or shared on OCDSB social media.

Digital Etiquette: Time spent on devices during the program reduces the connections between you and your children. Please limit personal non-urgent conversations and internet use. Social media platforms may be restricted on school networks.

Outerwear: Please place your outerwear and shoes/boots in the space provided. Limit bringing valuables into the centre. In an effort to keep our floors safe for all participants, please bring a pair of clean indoor shoes with you to wear during the program. There are a number of clean adult and child-sized foam shoes available if you forget to bring yours from home. For your safety, please refrain from wearing socks without shoes in the program as we participate in school emergency drills that may take us outside.

Baby Area: We offer a dedicated space where parents/caregivers with babies can interact and play. A baby change table is also available. Please dispose of all diapers into the designated container in the EarlyON Centre only. We offer breastfeeding/chestfeeding friendly centres.

Coffee and Tea: Coffee and tea are available for adults. Please keep hot drinks out of reach of children and ensure they have a properly fitting lid. Thermal cups with lids are available on-site. Please consider bringing your own thermal cup with a lid from home.

Smoking: Smoking is strictly prohibited on all OCDSB premises and is against the law (Smoke-Free Ontario Act). Recreational cannabis possession and/or use is not permitted on any OCDSB property.

Connect with Us

Email:

earlyon@ocdsb.ca

OCDSB Website:

ocdsb.ca

EarlyON Family Resources Page:

sites.google.com/ocdsb.ca/earlyon

X (formerly Twitter):

x.com/OCDSB

Facebook:

facebook.com/OCDSB

Instagram:

instagram.com/ottawacarletondsb

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