

MATTHEW JOHN

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

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The Matthew John Daycare Centre of Toronto (“MJDCC”) sees children as eager and active learners. Children benefit from a variety of experiences which give them opportunities to explore their environment, form relationships, develop skills and competences, and discover their own identity. Learning occurs constantly, not just in structured/formalized activities.

MJDCC provides a positive learning environment for children that enhances their personal development. Through play experiences and guidance by our trained staff, the children are exposed to situations that will stimulate: communication and social skills through child-child and adult-child interactions; fine motor development; gross motor development through physical activity and outdoor play; self-esteem and decision-making capabilities; curiosity, initiative and independence. Children are guided by Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) who establish a flexible program in an inclusive, supportive, and non-discriminatory environment. Children’s ideas are the crux of the emergent curriculum that is based on the interests and needs of the children. Open communication between and among staff, children, families and our community is crucial to creating a warm and safe environment in which the children at MJDCC can play, learn and thrive.

At MJDCC *“We believe capturing and documenting our practice is a form of reinforcement of the learning process for educators, family and children.”*

Our strategies to achieve our program statement are guided by the work done on Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years (“How Does Learning Happen”). We also recognize that learning and development happens within the context of relationships among children, families, educators, and their environments. We understand that for children to grow and flourish, the four following foundational conditions need to exist:

- A sense of Belonging,
- A sense of Well-Being,
- Opportunities and support for Engagement, and
- Opportunities and support for Expression.

The MJDCC curriculum is consistent with the “How Does Learning Happen?” (HDLH) Ontario’s pedagogy for the Early Years approach. MJDCC is using the Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) guiding principles to develop the program. Weekly program activities are linked to the Continuum of Development.

We strive to support children through the discovery and provide environments that are safe, fun, hands-on and play-based.

MJDCC GOALS AND APPROCHES

1. To promote health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children

We know that the early years set the foundation for children's health and well-being. We understand that the first step in establishing and nurturing health, safety and well-being for children in our programs is through the connections they make with the program staff, volunteers and students on placements. Here are some specific ways we promote well-being in our programs.

Health and safety—as a licensed child care facility, MJDCC meets and exceeds all health and safety requirements of the Ministry of Education and local government bylaws. Information is posted outside our program rooms on our "Parent Communication" boards and others (for example the Anaphylaxis Policy) are provided in the Parent Handbook. You can also speak to our program staff at any time to view our complete health and safety policies and protocols.

Nutrition—at MJDCC we strive towards educating young children and their families on nutrition and healthy child development. By providing children with healthy eating choices, provided by the catering company Real Food for Real Kids, we are mentoring life-long skills to nutritiously feed and nourish their bodies for optimal health and development. MJDCC menus follow Canada's Food Guide and are culturally sensitive. You can view the menu on the Parent Communication board as well as on our website. We accommodate dietary or religious food requirements for children in our programs.

2. To support positive relationships among children, families, and staff

It is important to MJDCC to foster collaborative and co-operative relationships among all our partners. Our staff communicates with parents/guardians daily, sharing observations, documentation and reflections through regular conversations.

We strive to promote a sense of belonging for children and their families in our programs by creating positive interactions and collaboration of families. We understand that relationships of trusts are the basis for learning and co-operation.

In our inclusive learning environments, we welcome children of all abilities. Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion is vital for optimal development and learning. Here are some of the ways in which we create an inclusive environment in our programs:

- Recognize each child as having equal rights to participate in program activities, trips and events.
- Recognize and respect the unique qualities of each child and family, including ancestry, culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio- economic status, family environment, and developmental abilities and needs.
- Create strategies that value the culture and first language of all children.
- Establish programming strategies to foster an inclusive learning environment in which every child can participate.
- View the diversity of children and families as an asset, and plan programs to reflect differences and enrich the environment.

Every child is entitled to be given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility and social skills, to learn to problem - solve and to learn about diversity and inclusion.

The skills of conflict resolution are important to lifelong learning. As competent individuals, children are active participants in resolving conflicts. We encouraged them to come up with ideas and solutions to problems that arise.

3. To support positive self-expression, communication, and self-regulation

At MJDCC, our inclusive programming leads to a child's sense of belonging. Positive learning environments and experiences, focused on active play-based learning, encourage children's communication, self-expression and self- regulation.

We seek to be aware of, foster, support, encourage, respond to and document the many ways in which children express themselves, the many "voices" with which they articulate their ideas, the variety of

“languages” they use to communicate. We also seek to honour and reflect children’s home language and culture in our programs.

We provide small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention.

Our program also supports children’s self-regulation, their ability to deal with stress and remain *calm, alert and ready to learn*. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to deal with their emotions, pay attention, ignore distractions, inhibit their impulses and understand the consequences of their actions. We are continually learning about how to create learning environments and programming that helps support children’s self-regulation—to help children remain or return to a state of calm.

4. To foster children exploration, play and inquiry

Our programs focus on active play-based learning as the way that children learn best. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play.

MJDCC staff creates a program that allows children to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby opening the door to new learning. The staff connects with families and community partners, and invites them to participate in the program, and working with them to provide equal learning experience for all children. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. At MJDCC children decide where, when, what and how they wish to play. Their decision is based on their interest and curiosity. Play is responsive to each child’s unique learning style and capitalizes on his or her innate curiosity and creativity.

5. To provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences

Play is children’s work and is very essential to healthy development. At MJDCC we believe that children learn best when they are engaged and interested in experiences provided for them. Our staff listens to and observes children, because they believe that this way they can develop a deeper understanding of children’s interests and perspective. The MJDCC program offers children ample opportunity to direct their play and explore their ideas and expand old ones. The staff’s role is to enhance the children’s interest, to support their ideas, to provide resources and materials, to help them reflect on what they know and think as well as provide emotional support and engagement.

Our program will give children opportunities for room exploration in a variety of activities. We provide open ended materials that allow for exploration and discovery, and we invite the children to share their ideas and interest with staff and peers.

6. To plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences

MJDCC view children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. We recognize that each child is a unique individual who brings his/her own abilities to the program and need encouragement and space to try new things, explore new ideas and develop their own unique creativity.

MJDCC provides this environment that fosters curiosity and exploration. We believe that every child deserves a safe and caring environment, in which they feel safe and can develop to their maximum potential. We understand the importance of taking children’s stages of development into consideration. Each child’s stage of development is an individualized and complex interplay between developmental factors and their unique family, community and life experiences. At MJDCC we aim to integrate all areas of the child’s development into our program in a holistic way. Our staff will refer to the Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) document, which provides comprehensive, detailed child development information.

This document is used to help determine skills that staff can be working on with the children. To create a positive environment for children with different abilities the staff will be working closely with Resource Educators to establish individual goals in conjunction with parents. Our staff will be working together to share their observations, reflect upon their observations and plan for the interests of children in their group.

7. To incorporate indoor and outdoor play, active play, and quiet time

The MJDCC program has been designed to meet the needs of the children and provide for a balance of activities throughout the day. We incorporate indoor and outdoor play daily. We promote active play, rest and quiet time, into the daily schedule, considering the individual needs of children in our care. Through an active indoor in the gym and/or outdoor program children utilized their whole bodies which support the development of healthy body and mind.

Quiet time is available during the program; children can sleep or have an activity in the quiet areas of the classroom. Our staff respects the wishes of the parents, and when possible, provides alternatives or modification when requested.

8. To foster parent engagement and communication

MJDCC aims to foster outreach, engagement and communication with families about our program and their children's learning experiences. We believe that families are experts on their children. Sharing knowledge is integral to the success of your child.

Parents and/or guardians are viewed as vital to their child's successful experience in our program and are encouraged to enter into a unique partnership/collaboration with the staff. Parents are also viewed as resources for our staff. With their intimate knowledge about their child and family, parents can provide essential information which can assist our staff and program to more fully meet the needs of their family and child. In addition, parents can provide unique and insightful understanding of their child's behaviour which MJDCC staff can incorporate into their program planning.

MJDCC aims to ensure that families have the support of available, affordable, safe, reliable, high quality licensed child care for their children, which ensures parents peace of mind while their children are in the MJDCC program. Respect, care, empathy, trust and integrity are core values in all our interactions with families.

We know that our partnerships with our families help our program to best meet the needs of the children:

- Families form the foundation for a child's early development. Families know their children best, and are the first and most powerful influence on learning and development.
- The needs of each child are considered in the context of their family composition, values, culture, and language. This approach enriches relationships between early childhood settings, families, and their communities.
- We involve parents and other important adults in various events and activities at our programs. This connects them to their children's early development, and enhances the child's learning.

In addition to the daily interaction with program staff, we offer many opportunities for parent feedback and involvement. We use parent input to improve our programs and services. MJDCC's staff provides parents with the opportunity to discuss their child's progress through on-going discussions, and parent meetings if necessary or requested. If there are any problems or concerns regarding your child, your child's teachers will discuss it with you so that we are all working together.

9. To involve local community partners

MJDCC is committed to involving local community partners and to engaging those partners in supporting our children, families and staff. We view the community as a valuable resource and our educators plan learning opportunities to engage the community in our programs. We seek out opportunity to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community.

We provide learning opportunities and practical work experience, in the areas of programming and administration, to members of the community through the recruitment, placement, training and recognition of volunteers and students on placement. Volunteers and students on placement augment the high-quality care and individual attention given to the children in the programs.

We celebrate and recognize our partners at our Annual BBQ every September.

10. To support staff in continuous professional learning

MJDCC is committed to hiring, training and fairly compensating staff. We hire staff who have a positive and sensitive attitude towards children. Our non-discriminatory hiring practices provide individuals of all backgrounds the opportunity for employment. We believe that everyone has worth; value and all staff are

entitled to be respected, supported and treated fairly.

The staff at MJDCC are skilled professionals who have chosen to work with children and families as their career. Through their training, they have developed an understanding of the processes involved in facilitating children's growth and development. They possess effective communication and interpersonal skills for relating to both children and adults. They have developed skills in observation, planning and evaluation.

We understand that professional learning is important, but we also know that the most central professional growth happens day-to-day, as our staff co-learn with children and each other as self-reflective professionals. We provide for staff opportunities in-house professional training as well as attending outside learning workshops.

Most of MJDCC staff are registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. All other program staff are: Registered Teacher and Early Childhood Assistances.

11. To document and review the impact of the strategies set out in goals#1-10 on the children and families.

At MJDCC, we understand that pedagogical documentation is a way for our program staff to learn about how children think and learn.

Our staff make daily observations of children in the program and use this information in their future planning. The purpose of our documentation is also:

- A way to value children's experiences and help them to reflect back on those experiences and what they have been learning
- An opportunity to make children's learning and understanding of the world visible—to themselves, to other children, to their parents and other families, to the program staff
- A way to reflect on developmental growth over a period of time
- A process for program staff to co-plan with children about learning
- A dialogue with families about children's experience and an invitation for parents to add their own documentation about their children's learning
- A self-reflection opportunity for program staff, as they participate in continuous professional learning