

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE – PROGRAM STATEMENT

The Fundamentals of Childcare

There are four fundamental building blocks for the raising of our children as outlined in the ELECT document:

- 1) Belonging
- 2) Well-Being
- 3) Engagement
- 4) Expression

Belonging means the child is made to feel supported by inclusion.

Belonging means that the child is a part of something, is connected to peers and the community so they feel supported enough to contribute to the world around them.

Well-Being is about supporting and teaching self-care in order to promote physical and mental health wellness, providing tools for self-regulation.

Engagement sees to it that the community supports the child by providing skills that focus and support curiosity. Children are curious and capable. By engaging the child's skills such as problem solving, and creative thinking will prove to be invaluable through each step of their life journey.

As educators we must encourage expression of our children in all forms. All children are communicators.

Children are our Business

Children are curious and competent and rich in potential. Children are willing and capable to have complex thoughts. These are the fundamentals of How Does Learning Happen. In order to provide the right support, the educator and family must work together in order to create a reliable, supportive and nurturing pedagogy (HLDH 2014).

The basis of our pedagogical practice is to inform children and families that we are always near.

St. Bartholomew's Children's Centre is a small program with a capacity of 30 school age children and 2 full time staff. A smaller program gives us a chance to be closer to our families, which has helped us build community.

At the Children's Centre we have a long history of providing consistent programming that strives to accept all children.

Our Goals and Objectives

“Close to Your Home, Close to Our Heart”

At St. Bartholomew’s Children’s Centre our goals and objectives support these fundamental building blocks by providing a nurturing environment where there is no judgment. At the Children’s Centre we believe that smaller group sizes and inclusion are essential to providing an effective community-based program.

What does a judgement free nurturing environment look like?

- ♥ Caring staff who build relationships with the individual as well as the group as a whole.
- ♥ Flexibility in programming to allow for small group interactions.
- ♥ Staff trained in conflict management.

CHILDREN ARE CURIOUS, CAPABLE AND FULL OF POTENTIAL

At the Children’s Centre the staff encourage, and support child led activities by involving them in the program planning process.

What does this look like?

- ♥ Children have full access to a planning book and are supported by teachers or older children if they need support sharing their ideas.
- ♥ The Staff engage the children in weekly discussions where questions are asked, and programming ideas are put into action for the following week.
- ♥ We give the children time to join in on planned activities by providing access to the materials throughout the week, not only the day the activity was planned for.
- ♥ Snacks and lunches are evaluated with the children and a suggestion box is always available for the children to share ideas anonymously.

WHERE DID ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHILDREN'S CENTRE COME FROM?

St. Bartholomew's Children's Centre has been serving the Regent Park Community for well over **30 years**. In the beginning the Centre was part of a collection of programs, operated by the church, which administered to the high needs of this community.

In **1983** the Centre was incorporated and began operating as a secular After-School recreation program. The Centre existed in this incarnation for **almost 20 years**.

In **1999** when the province announced that they would no longer fund the program as an after school drop-in recreation facility and the only option we were given was to open a School-age daycare. This transition enabled us to provide more focused programming and trained staff, as there were very few staffing guidelines for after-school program at the time.

This sizeable transition helped transform the way we deliver services to our community.

What did these changes look like?

- ♥ The development of new policies and procedures.
- ♥ Strict programming changes set out by governing documents.
- ♥ Purchase and acquisition of play equipment and materials.
- ♥ Our "Drop-In" became an all-the-time program,

Our Community

At the children's Centre we support the fundamentals of ELECT by providing a secure and nurturing community hub for our families.

What does this look like?

- ♥ We are a big family.
- ♥ Our connection to the children and parents continues after they have left the Centre.

- ♥ We provide opportunity for past children to practice and demonstrate leadership skills by offering volunteer opportunities as they mature.
- ♥ As a stand-alone school age program, we care for children ages 6 years old to 12 years old. This means that we can have larger families in our care for 12 years. This close connection and history sets us apart from other community daycares.

The Centre's Executive Director has been working at the Children's Centre for over 30 years and the Program Coordinator has been with the organization for over 20 years. This longevity is the evidence of the Centre's commitment and connection to the Regent Park community.

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND INCLUSION

Health

At the Children's Centre we are committed to the health and well-being of the children. Our program supports the physical needs of the children.

How do we do it?

- ♥ We have full access to an outdoor basketball court and green space.
- ♥ We support gross motor play and development with an assortment of outdoor play equipment, such as scooters, bicycles, roller racers, balls of all sizes and textures.
- ♥ This equipment also contributes to your child's balancing skills and helps create a positive relationship with physical exercise.

At the children's Centre we teach strategies and important lessons that are intended to support a healthy upbringing as the children strive towards a healthy happy future.

What does this look like?

- ♥ The Centre teaches and promotes healthy habits such as handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

- ♥ Every summer the staff conduct a health week where the children participate in activities, games and discussions around physical and mental health as well as physical hygiene.
- ♥ Upon completion of the health week unit children are all given personal hygiene packs with various tools to keep with them through the summer.
- ♥ We support inquiry and help parents find answers to difficult questions relating to puberty and sexual health.

Nutrition

We teach and support the various nutritional needs of the children on our care.

How do we do it?

- ♥ We promote healthy attitudes towards food and nutrition by providing snacks and lunches.
- ♥ All menus follow the guidelines set out in Canada's Food Guide.
- ♥ We give our children the chance to help plan the meals and snacks, which helps connect them to the program, giving them a true sense of belonging.
- ♥ We encourage the children to try new foods.
- ♥ We encourage children to share recipes of the food that they eat at home.
- ♥ When possible, we provide lunches prepared on site or independent catering companies who can work with us to support the unique nutritional needs of our children.

Well-Being

Well-Being is the goal that drives all of our programs, relationships and professional development. A

What does this look like?

- ♥ We start by supporting and alleviating the common stresses of school by providing homework help for the children.
- ♥ Homework help is a helpful tool for parents, who find homework the top stressor for raising school-age children.
- ♥ We offer the children choice and support their autonomy when programming through suggestion boxes and kids planning books.
- ♥ The staff are trained in conflict management and are expert problem solvers.
- ♥ We teach the children how to become expert problem solvers themselves

Inclusion

At the Children's Centre we accept children who have had difficulty fitting in to other daycares and after-school programs. Our capacity is 30 children. On average we carry a minimum of five children with recognized special needs. We are firm believers that inclusion and integrated programs build a culture of respect and teach empathy.

Partners in success

The Centre's resource consultant plays an integral role in the lives of our children with special needs by connecting staff and families with vital program supports. We feel well supported by our resource consultant.

How Does Learning Happen at St. Bartholomew's Children's Centre?

At the Children's Centre we use our community to engage the children and families and community partners to "build connections, learn, and discover".

Our Team

Staff

All of the staff at St. Bartholomew's Children's Centre is either an RECE or has significant experience working with children and families.

The staff at the Centre work with the children to encourage their own **inquiry** and support their individual needs. The benefit to working with school age children is that **interactions** between children and staff can be candid or calculated.

We strive to ensure the children feel safe and supported so that conversation can flow freely, opening up the space for additionally meaningful relationships and interactions.

The staff at St. Bart's are largely motivated by the view of children as being curious, capable and full of potential. Through collaborative planning and meaningful interactions, the staff are able to support inquiry.

Motivation is key to **empowering** the children to create and lead the program that best reflects their interests. The staff's role then is to provide a nurturing environment, child-adult interactions and the **self-exploration** that is needed in order to develop identity.

School-age programs are unique in that the children attend the daycare for an average of **six years**. During this time their social and emotional, development is very significant. Since the Children's Centre has a history of retaining staff the relationships that are built have real history. This leads to a solid sense of trust and familiarity that can be lost in a big city such as Toronto.

The Centre supports the **professional development** of all program staff by providing financial remuneration.

The Centre's Executive Director has been working at the Children's Centre for **over 30 years** and the Program Coordinator has been with the organization for **over 20 years**. This longevity is the evidence of the Centre's commitment and connection to the Regent Park community.

Children

Without the children we would have no team! At the children's centre we respect the knowledge and curiosity of the children.

Children are teachers too. Adults have a lot to learn from children as well. This reciprocity is an important component to a successful program.

The children's centre supports a partnership between the staff and children by encouraging self-directed activities by planning with the children, using the opportunity to model collaboration.

Parents

Parents are experts. One of the key components to a successful program is when true collaboration between teachers and parents happens. This collaboration does not need to be categorized by the lengthy planning of formal meetings.

At the Children's Centre we welcome feedback from all parents. We believe that a program supported by our community and our parents is best suited to raising happy healthy children. Earlier in this document we mentioned the ELECT principle that children are competent and capable, curious and rich in potential, this is also true for families. Here are some of the opportunities that allow parents to become more involved.

- ♥ An **Annual General Meeting** where parents will meet the Board of Director's and be reassured of their right and responsibility to be involved in their child's care.
- ♥ Monthly board meetings are open for parents to attend and opportunities are available for them to join the Board.
- ♥ Upcoming events either verbally or through newsletters and written reminders.
- ♥ Every year, a **survey** for all parents is conducted by the Center to collect opinions and concerns of parents about the current program and to collect suggestions for improvement and topics for meetings that meet the needs of parents.
- ♥ A detailed list of **Summer trips** is handed out in advance in order to give parents time to choose and book off any time they may like in order to attend the excursions.

Informally we encourage discussion and camaraderie amongst the parents and staff by providing a comfortable welcoming environment for social time at the end of each day.

Pedagogical Documentation

Cameras are always rolling. Through photographs we are able to communicate learning experiences with parents and children alike. Every month we produce two observations per child. Our use of written observations and photographs to document the learning at the Children's Centre has become an essential tool for planning and reflection.

Communication

In order to operate a successful program clear and consistent communication is mandatory.

How do we communicate at SBCC?

Verbally

- ♥ Through informal interactions at pick-up and drop-off time.
- ♥ When physical distancing measures need to be met these conversations happen through phone calls.

Hi Mama

- ♥ Important information
- ♥ Pedagogical documentation
- ♥ Parent reminders
- ♥ Screening forms
- ♥ Centre Activities

Program Offered

Before and After School care

- ♥ The Centre opens from 7:30am to 9:30am for morning care. During this time, we provide a light snack and escort the children to our community schools and busses.
- ♥ We are back to it again in the afternoon providing care for children attending at least three community schools and three out of area French and Catholic schools.

Safe-Walk

We have a walker who is able to pick up the children from the local schools and bring them to the Centre. There are three public schools one catholic school within close walking range of St. Bart's. This gives the children a chance often to visit the schools of their daycare peers.

St. Bartholomew's Children's Centre is unique in that it operates as a stand-alone school age daycare. It is our commitment to the children and families in our community to provide a level of care and support that exceeds other recreational programs in the city.

All of these things contribute to a sense of belonging. Having the added benefit of serving children from many different schools gives the children and families a chance to build relationships and form lasting bonds that they would otherwise not have the chance to do.

Summer/March Break program

- ♥ During the summer we provide an 8-week full-time program.
- ♥ We travel to a new destination in Toronto and surrounding areas.
- ♥ Our weekly trips are an integral part of our summer program, they give the children a chance to experience things and places they wouldn't otherwise have.
- ♥ Every Thursday during the summer program we spend the afternoon in the pool at the newly built Regent Park Aquatic Centre.
- ♥ Trained and confident staff are able to help the children, who have had less experience in the water, build their skills and confidence as swimmers. This is just one of the ways we support a sense of belonging in our children.

Community

We are proud to call Regent Park our home. As the area undergoes a complete revitalization it is important for us to maintain and recognize the cultural and historical significance of Canada's oldest public housing initiative.

Regent Park has been in a state of redevelopment for 15 years. The Children's Centre has operated as an island for most of that time. We have watched the neighborhood transform around us and so it is important that we embrace the change. We cannot erase the past and forget the foundation this new development is built on.

- ♥ At the Children's Centre we believe that a thriving community can exist outside of a school or community centre
- ♥ A community needs active participants coming together to meet a goal, in this case the goal is belonging and well-being.

The Centre strives to utilize the many resources Regent Park has available, such as:

- Toronto Public Library (Gerrard & Berkeley)
- Children's Book Bank (Gerrard & Berkeley)
- Riverdale Farm
- Main Regent Park and Playground.
- Regent Park Community Centre
- Regent Park Focus
- Pam McConnel Aquatic Centre
- Community gardens
- Regent Park Sports Field

Community Events

There are often events happening in our community that involve various cultural groups. We strive to support these events by advertising and attending. This also helps us remain connected to Regent Park.

Fun Fair

Each year the Children's Centre puts on a Fun Fair. While this is advertised as a fundraiser our primary goal is community participation and engagement.

How is this goal accomplished?

- ♥ Over the years we have built up a community of volunteers for this event. Many of the same people return from year to year because they have made these life-long ties to the Children's Centre.

Putting our Program Statement in Action

In order to ensure the practices outlined in this document are being honored and implemented. All new staff and volunteers and Board Members are obligated to read and sign off on the statement before starting at the Centre. Each year the supervisor performs a compliance checklist for staff and volunteers.

