PROGRAM STATEMENT

Our mission statement: to offer families and children the greatest experiment and the highest quality of care while with our qualified early childhood educators

Our vision: We are devoted to the art of caring. Our focus centers on children learning through play and families needs with socialization in mind.

Our values: We will act with integrity and will value and protect our relationships. Our work will be the best that we can offer.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery school has set forth the following goals and approaches to plan and create a positive learning environment to support each individual child’s needs. We are confident in our programs quality and ability to lead your child’s development of belonging, well being, engagement and expression.

We are sure to meet your child’s four foundations identified in “How Does Learning Happen” as set out in Ontario’s pedagogy for the Early Years. For more information regarding “How Does Learning Happen?”please see this website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

Program Goals:

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

• We establish safety inside and outside ensuring the children are in charge of their basic needs and emotions.

• We encourage the children to walk inside and keep the running for outside; we set up our rooms for the children’s success via their interests; we put our materials in a way that the children will not trip or fall.

• We cover all open plugs.

• We ensure the children are able to be physically active outside.

• We establish a foundation for healthy eating by offering the children their choice of time they’d like to have snack; offering an open snack twice daily at a table with their peers, ensuring all children are inclusive in their needs. We offer the children their choice of amount of food including choice of crackers, fruit and water daily. We ask families to donate healthy fruit weekly. We have special healthy sharing days taking into account brain development with protein, carbs and water for mental wellbeing.

• We wash the toys after the last day of the week and set up the toys again on Monday morning, trying to keep germs at a minimum. We hire a cleaning company that comes to clean the centre every evening, using appropriate cleaning supplies for childcare centres. We offer sanitation stations throughout the centre for families.

• Children are able to self regulate and choose their activity. We strive to have children manage their own emotions. We have our four rooms open with an educator in each room to ensure the children can decide/make their choice of where they would like to explore. We create many stimulating, safe environments to choose from. We expand on the children’s interests when we see they are having questions about subjects. We offer assistance when needed.

• Staff familiarizes themselves with child’s file or any needs/allergies, signing any plan that is in place for allergies. We also ask families for a picture of their child for the child’s file, ensuring new staff would recognize children as well.

2. We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff.

• We foster a sense of belonging and ownership in our nursery school. We do this by sending newsletters,

emails, posting pictures and antidotes to elicit questions. We have many parent volunteers that

help with fundraising, board of directors, laundry or speaking with the groups of children. We have

special get together throughout the year for family inclusion.

• We encourage the connections between family and educators by ensuring we greet the children every

morning, being attuned to the child’s feelings and responding appropriately.

• We offer our assistance when warranted with children, ensuring we are available for play.

• We keep routines flexible so children will feel in charge of what is happening next.

• We develop policies and procedures for staff to adhere to within the modernization act.

• We integrate elements in our program to ensure children feel valued by documenting their work on

the walls etc. We display their artwork and quotes within our centre and via storypark communication.

• We take pictures of the children while participating in activities to encourage deeper connections.

• We offer options for play if the child is struggling to interact; we help facilitate an activity alongside or

with another child.

• We have activities ready for the children to explore

• Invitations to play are set up in each room.

• We give an authentic response about a child’s activities throughout the day, promoting a conversation

through child and family.

• We collect and display family photos of staff, children and families. We add this to our daily play by

displaying on walls, blocks, toys in rooms and hallways.

• We model and mentor children with other children and staff realizing they are co-learners.

• We use other ways of communication other than words; touch of the hand, eye-to-eye communication,

pictures etc.

• Considerations we, as educators, use are: families beliefs/cultures and holidays (how we can ensure all families are being included in the centre consistently); have we explored all available to our centres families? Did we have an emphasis on the positive? Did we offer open-ended questions to children so they feel involved? Did we use reflective practice of “what did this offer today”, “why did this not work?” “What could we have done differently?” “What outcome were we expecting and what happened?”

“What was the purpose?” “Did we give attention to the positive and not the negative?”

3. Ways in which we encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way while supporting their ability to self-regulate:

• We provide opportunities to support the children in our centre; we do this by providing the children with many activities and materials to choose from; we recognize all children have different interests and respond differently in situations.

• Educators observe, inquire and provide feedback to children and families

• We observe and document what the children’s interests are while offering open-ended resources.

• We communicate directly with parents

• We provide open ended questions to children so the children can make their own choices and decisions

• We offer photos to invite to play (pictures of real items not cartoon pictures)

• We allow enough time and flexibility of time for children to regulate their beginning and ending of activities;

we often extend snack while children finish their activity or “save” their plans thus creating a sense of belonging

• We prepare the environment for success; if we have challenges (running, throwing, not able to line up etc.) we problem solve to see what will work easier, ensuring a sense of success not failure with the children and groups

• We step back to observe rather than policing

• We do not interrupt children’s play, we observe

• We make a welcoming space for the children

• We make outside time interact; we offer the same experiences outside that we have inside; animals, cars, books, etc.

• We offer storypark to parents and families so we can communicate what the children are doing throughout their time with us, often giving quotes of the children.

• We use a communication log with each staff on their clipboard as well as in the office for a general log book

• We make story boards throughout the centre

• We fundraise for items on the centres wish list

• We invite parents to events

4. Ways in which children foster their ability to explore play and inquiry:

• We offer a variety of activities! Children may chose what they would like to play while we provide new experiences

• Children chose their playmates

• Children chose how long they would like to play in areas

• Children are exposed to all play

• Staff encourages self-motivation and self-regulation by offering words to the children, by showing the

rooms, by asking children questions etc.

• The educator follows the child’s lead for experiences and expand on those: ex: if children are interested in Farm animals one day, we may ask the child about their experiences with seeing farm animals then post pictures of the animals they have seen; we may add a carpet for grass or add people or food or other farm related items for children to expand their imagination and knowledge.

• Children develop their senses via the many activities simultaneously in our areas of play: art, sand, water, gross motor, dramatic, music, puzzles, fine motor etc.

• Children explore their knowledge and vocabulary with other children their age while in either our toddler or preschool programs.

• Staff will expand the child’s language by facilitating dialogues between the children but the children are always encouraged to mediate and solve dilemmas.

• Staff setting up the rooms regarding the children’s interests expands children’s knowledge base. The staff take the position as the co-learner, knowing the children are competent and capable.

5. We provide a child-initiated and adult-supported experience every day for the children in our nursery school. We do this by letting them chose the toys they play with inside and outside, ensuring to change the items as the children’s interests changes. We provide a variety of toys that are accessible in bins, inside and out.

We provide the children with a child sized toilet and sinks to support a positive experience while training.

Snack time is also self-regulated by the child by the children choosing when and what they would like to have for snack. We offer a fruit, cheese, crackers and water daily. The snack room is open for “business” at any point of the morning or afternoon, offering a varied snack to the children. We then clean up snack and get ready for our outdoor time. We add/take away items as the children show interest or lose interest. We set the rooms up so the children can chose their activity while leaving room for change. For example, we offer a variety of puzzles, books, crafts, and sensory, gross motor activities every day. The children may chose which room they would like to

be in then chose when they would like to move to another room. An educator remains in each room for facilitating the play. The children may ask for help to complete a task, as the teacher is always available to assist.

6. We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child’s learning and development will be supported. We do this by setting up the classrooms to encourage independence. We introduce ideas and expand on the ideas creating knowledge-based learning. We put minimal supplies and toys out, encouraging the children to create an environment they are interested in. Children can regulate what they’d like to do and where they would like to play. If a child is having a hard time joining in play, we help to guide them by giving them the skills to initiate play. We do this by encouraging the child to play alongside other children while doing activities; we model and imitate positive socialization. We offer a variety of activities at a time, ensuring the child has confidence in their own abilities.

7. We incorporate 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 in our care. We do this by providing a well-rounded day with the children that has the flexibility to ensure that the individual needs of the children are met. We provide opportunities to go outside and offer play materials outside an hour in the morning and the same in

the afternoon. We also provide active areas in the rooms with the appropriate equipment for the children to choose from. We ensure we have quiet areas in all the rooms for the children to choose if they need to. We also provide “down time” after the lunch program where the children may choose from a variety of fine motor activities or group activities as some children choose to relax and bring their comfort toys.

8. At St. Thomas the apostle Nursery School, we foster the engagement of the ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.

We do this by documentation with pictures with activities and writing what is happening in the picture, ensuring to post for parents to ask questions or comment on with their child. We write quotes of what the children say throughout the day. We offer slide shows on a computer in one of the rooms of the accumulated pictures we have taken throughout the year. We post documentation in the hallways for parents to view

during pick up, drop off or anytime throughout the year. We plan and facilitate gatherings throughout the year for families to join together with children and staff,

offering conversation starters about the program and what we are doing with the children. We plan an annual family run, a family tea, friendship breakfast, dessert night and year end BBQ. We offer many resources to parents to sign up and receive ongoing communication from our program and staff. We offer “storypark”, our website and monthly calendar and newsletters. We also communicate ongoing with parents during drop off and pickup, giving some positive feedback regarding their child’s success within our program!

9. St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School involves local community partners and allows these partners to support the children, the families and staff. We are inclusive by asking parents/community member volunteers to bring their ideas to our center via our board of directors or by invitations to help create an atmosphere of community. We have had painting parties in our playground, planting flowers and vegetables, leave raking, volunteering with the children, speaking to the children about their jobs and careers; we even have a parent sharing her pregnancy with our preschool groups!

10. We support staff or others who interact with children in our care. We have mandated professional learning for all staff but also share professional learning with families via email, via information boards in our centre, Google drive and print outs! Our budget allows for staff paid leave and pays for workshops. We encourage all staff to continue reflective practice of their days, their strategies and challenges.

11. We document and review the impact of strategies on children and families by sharing stories, pictures and quotes via storypark; we ask for feedback anonymously and on our website. We have parent feedback forms along with parent surveys. We have parent reps on our board of directors, encouraging all families to be part of our open meetings. We keep minutes of our meetings and review for the following meeting month and year. We also do planning via feedback for the year.

Our program statement is a living document that changes as the program evolves along with children, staff, families and the community.