



PROGRAM STATEMENT

In accordance with the Minister's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy made under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (*Regulation 46*) as set out in "*How Does Learning Happen (HDLH)?*", Great Beginnings Montessori School (GBMS) is in agreement with HDLH that all children are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. GBMS is committed to strengthening the quality of our programs that lead to positive outcomes in relation to children's learning, development, health and well-being and we are committed to collaborating with children, their families and with educators to create high quality early learning and care environments that take a strength based approach to learning and development where children, parents and educators are co-learners. It is important to note that Montessori pedagogy often describes children's activities as 'work' where HDLH describes children's activity as 'play' but the activities, as experienced by a child, are one in the same.

Our *Mission Statement* reads, "The aim of our school is to provide our students with an enriched education in all areas. We will bring out each student's personal best using the Montessori philosophy, which treats each child as an individual. We expect/guarantee our students to be well prepared socially, emotionally and educationally for the next level of their learning."

This Program Statement describes our goals for children at GBMS and the approach taken to implement and meet those goals.

All staff receive an orientation on the Inclusion/Access & Equity Policy and attend a special needs-focused training opportunities on effective inclusive programming whenever possible.

The program staff will adapt the environment and routines as necessary to meet the needs of the children enrolled. The program is committed to developing flexible programming that can be adapted as required. Program adaptations are reviewed with the parents and support agencies.

GBMS will foster partnerships by working collaboratively with parents and community supports in order to meet the needs of all children. GBMS will, with the consent of the parent, enlist services from Special Needs Resourcing for children whom they feel, or the parents feels, may need extra support.

GBMS 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 and value and all staff are entitled to be respected, supported and treated fairly.

Our program also demonstrates strong leadership by supporting staff training needs. We support our educators, and others who interact with children, to continually self-reflect, have discussions, foster ongoing collaboration, and engage in continuous professional learning, in order to provide the best possible learning environment for children. Our staff is provided with many mandatory health and safety related training sessions, such as Standard First Aid and Infant Child CPR issued by a training agency recognized by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; Occupational Health and Safety training, and WHMIS.

Changes and implementations are communicated through staff meetings and staff memos. Annual “beginning of the year” staff meetings insure upcoming goals and expectations, support for achievement, and general event dates for the year. The office offers an open door policy that gives staff easy access for immediate issues which may arise. The “beginning of the year” meeting also allows an opportunity for staff to complete any annual training updates and review and complete all necessary documentation required. This is also the time that compliance issues can be generally addressed while specific compliance issues are discussed at the time of infraction. Inter staff as well as admin evaluations are conducted each year allowing the ongoing monitoring of compliance with the Program Statement.

GBMS promotes the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children in our care by diligently meeting all the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 137/15*.

We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff by communicating, promoting and adhering to our ‘Values’ and our ‘Code of Conduct’. These are communicated in our Staff Policies and in our Parent Handbook. They are applied to all members of GBMS – staff, students, parents, volunteers, visitors and observers.

How does Learning Happen? forms the Basis of our Program....

The early years curriculum is the sum total of experiences, activities, and events that occur within an inclusive environment designed to foster children’s well-being, learning, and development and ensure meaningful participation for every child.

Using the common framework articulated in HDLH, we strive to achieve the following *goals* and will meet the *expectations* for programs building on the four *foundations* for healthy growth and development.

1. **Belonging** – Educators provide a safe environment by nurturing each child’s individual needs. Children are encouraged to participate in daily activities, and interact with others in a positive way. Educators support peer relationships and encourage problem solving in social settings. Our students are strongly connected to their teachers; they feel safe and have the confidence to play, explore and learn about the world around them.
2. **Well-Being** – Healthy meals and snacks are provided daily. (following Canada’s Food Guide). Educators encourage independence and when needed, modify/adapt activities or the environment to support individual needs of the child. Educators respond to cues (hunger, separation anxiety, anger etc.) of each child and support them accordingly. There are daily opportunities for exploration, tackling challenges, learning likes and dislikes to help define a sense of self. Educators provide a routine/predictable environment with transition warnings to reduce stress and allow children to lead activities. Staff supports each child’s ability to self-regulate by identifying emotions, modeling coping strategies and paying close attention to each child’s emotional well-being. Daily routines such as mealtimes or getting ready to go outside provide an ideal opportunity for children to practice their growing self-care abilities as well as promoted self-regulation, persistence and a sense of competence.
3. **Engagement** – Educators design indoor and outdoor space to encourage investigation, exploration, provide challenges and invite children to play. Educators act as co-learners and engage in the play with children to help test theories, identify children’s interests, encourage social skills, and model problem solving skills. Educators enhance play by valuing children’s ideas and contributions.
4. **Expression** – Every child is a capable communicator who is able to express themselves in many ways. Children communicate through their bodies, words and use of materials and educators respond to this through a strength based approach, focusing on the accomplishments of each child by celebrating milestones; identifying and enhancing strengths and providing immediate feedback when a child shows effort or success.

To promote the health, safety and well-being of young children, families and educators you will see:

- Photographs and names of all the staff are posted.
- Well organized environments, with lots of materials that are easily accessible to the children. Our aesthetics, furnishings, materials and schedule is all geared to the child where they can imagine, think, create and solve problems.
- A process to sign your child in and out of the program, to ensure they are safely supervised.
- Healthy menus, following the Canada’s Food Guide developed by registered professionals.
- Children and staff washing their hands frequently throughout the day to promote good hygiene and to prevent the spread of illness.

- The centre is kept clean throughout the day (documented), and is professionally cleaned on a nightly basis by on-site custodians.
- Educators follow the health and safety guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education and the Durham Region Health Department by using daily/weekly checklists, reviewing and following procedures and posting signs with instructions in appropriate places.
- Lots of opportunities for gross motor play; children are encouraged to use their entire bodies to explore the world. Various toys and equipment are used to promote jumping, crawling, balancing and hand/eye coordination on a daily basis.
- We provide a secure environment through having locked exterior doors at all times. Visitors, parents, volunteers, staff are required to ring the doorbell to gain access.
- Our Toddler and Casa 1 programs do not have computer or television time. In the event that there is an indoor recess and our gym is occupied due to intramurals, the children would be engaged in a 30 minute singsong, story or age appropriate movie. This is implemented only during inclement weather days.
- Opportunities for rest and a balance between active and more reflective play are strategies that will be implemented to support positive interactions and facilitate healthy development. The goal of the Casa Physical Education Program is to foster a comfort level and sense of fun for athletic activity; work towards longer periods of sustained physical activity; work towards more complex activities from simple active games up to the preparation for sports-style play; prepare children for the role physical education will play as they move into elementary levels.

We foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry by having a fully equipped Montessori environment in which many activities are present for the full range of ages in each room. There are activities that assist children to become independent, to assist the care of the self, care of the environment and care of others (Grace and Courtesy). Activities are encouraged that explore and refine the senses as well as encouraging the discovery of sequencing and order. Activities to increase vocabulary, encourage discussion, explore sounds, and begin to develop the process of writing and reading are also presented.

Daily program plans lay out the flow of the day and transitions are done quickly from one lesson/activity to the next. Weekly themes and Montessori lessons are posted and a copy is given to the parents. Children choose their activity and educators observe their work and build upon that skill by modifying it to be more challenging or less challenging. The dramatic centre in the Toddler room is created based on children's interests. New materials are introduced in order to enhance children's skills and abilities. Before and after school daycare is primarily child lead play.

Educators ask open ended questions to encourage children to use critical thinking skills. Shelves are always full of toys/activities and are changed bi-weekly depending on children's interests and abilities. Outdoor toys are provided to encourage active gross motor play.

Daily documentation is given to parents regarding diapering/toileting, eating, sleeping, general mood, how they played, what activities they did, and any additional comments. Daily communication with parents occurs at drop off and pick up. Monthly reports are also written based on each child's emotional, physical, cognitive, and social development and reviewed by the Principal.

The Toddler program includes daily journals for the parents and 1 progress report at the end of the school year. Teachers are always available for parent meetings when there are concerns and the office has an open door policy regarding questions/concerns or feedback. In addition, there is a "How Learning Happens" board outside the Toddler Room with pictures of our Toddlers participating in classroom activities and outside playtime.

The Casa 1 program includes monthly reports on each child reviewed by the Principal and Casa 1 students receive 3 report cards per year and 2 parent/teacher interviews. Teachers are always available for parent meetings when there are concerns and the office has an open door policy regarding questions/concerns or feedback.

There are opportunities for parents to volunteer at the school and community helpers and services are part of the curriculum in both classes. Volunteers and services are discussed and approved by the Principal and integrated into literacy material, arts and crafts, and dramatic play into the daily lessons. Bulletin boards, children's artwork and door displays reflect what the children are learning.

Prohibited Practices

Children benefit socially, emotionally and physically for our positive approach at GBMS. Teachers focus on helping the child understand their feelings and emotions and provide support to help regulate their behaviour.

The following are unacceptable strategies and are not permitted at any time under any circumstances.

- a) Corporal punishment of the child;
- b) Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- c) Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- d) Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;

- e) Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding; or
- f) Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

All new staff, students and volunteers are required to review the program statement prior to interaction with children in our care, and any time the program statement is updated. All staff is required to review the program statement on an annual basis. This will be accomplished at a year-end all staff team meeting which provides an opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges of the past year and to set goals for the upcoming year. A Program Statement sign-off sheet will be signed each school year.

Approved by Principal:

August 2018