

The Children's Centre

Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Children's Centre!

Please take the time to read through this important information and familiarize yourself with the Centre's policies, important reminders, and notes on our philosophy, snack time, and what not to wear!

Parent Handbook

Fall 2010

Our Staff

A short introduction to the people who make our programs as much educational as they are fun!

Page 2

Areas of Communication

Find out the best ways to keep in contact with staff.

Page 2



Backpack Attack!

There's a method to the backpack mayhem! Find out the necessities for a cool and comfortable experience at The Centre!

Page 3

Happy Birthday!



Birthdays can be oh-so-sweet at The Centre! Find out more on Page 3

Health Issues

What happens when your child gets sick? Who needs to know and why? Find out what you need to do when you've got a cough, the cold, or the flu!

Page 2

Board Welcome!

This year's board of directors welcomes you to The Centre and wishes you a happy and healthy school year!



Our Philosophy

Because The Children's Centre is, at once, play-based, parent-run, and non-profit, our philosophy is three-fold.

Play-based

Play is the pleasurable, absorbing, necessary work of children, freely chosen by them and under their control. Play develops physical and intellectual skills, promotes emotional health and creativity, and helps children learn to get along with others. The role of Centre staff and parents is to plan and provide opportunities that capitalize on the child's natural tendency to play.



Parent-run

Parents and families are a big part of what we do at The Children's Centre. We encourage all parents to be deeply involved in their children's time at The Centre. Because everyone is working together to ensure the best environment and best learning

experiences for their children, long-lasting friendships and community partnerships are made every year. Most importantly, children benefit greatly from this cooperative structure as it allows them the comfort and satisfaction of knowing that their parents are both involved in and dedicated to their education.

Non-profit

The Children's Centre is a non-profit organization, which means any and all income generated by tuition or donations goes straight into the classrooms, programs, and their continual betterment. Our bottom line is the quality of our program -- it always has been and always will be.

If you would like more information on our philosophy and how we put it into practice, please do not hesitate to ask any member of the staff -- we'll be happy to fill you in!

THE STAFF

The staff at The Children's Centre are experienced and dedicated Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). Each staff member brings their knowledge, appreciation and love of learning, clearly defined goals, and their own distinct personality to the programs. This potent mix of professionalism, personality, and heart creates an atmosphere of enthusiasm and warmth that can be felt by children and parents alike. Please introduce yourself and get to know them -- they're great people!

Sandra Mercer
Centre Co-ordinator

Kendra Walsh
Co-operator
Pre-school One staff

Jennifer Walsh
Pre-school Two staff

Nora Trask
Pre-school Two staff

Melissa Bennett
Pre-school Two staff

Alison Elford
Pre-school One / Two staff

Bonnie Hudson
Pre-school One staff
Administration

Sara Inkpen
Pre-school Two staff
Administration

Areas of Communication

It's very important that parents and staff are communicating on a regular basis. Here are the ways you can get in touch with us!

Staff

We are always happy to answer any questions you may have, and discuss your child's progress and development with you. We welcome any suggestions you may have concerning your child's comfort and contentment while in our care. While not always able to have a lengthy conversation at arrival or departure times, we are more than happy to meet with you at a mutually convenient time.

Centre Notices

When we need to communicate any information to all parents at The Centre, it will be posted in various locations around The Centre itself. Important information can always be found posted either just outside classrooms or on our bulletin boards. We ask that parents please make a habit of checking these areas regularly to ensure that everyone is "in the know".

The Communication Book

Located on the red chest in The Centre's foyer, our Communication Book provides an easy way for parents to communicate short, simple messages to staff about family comings and goings, absences due to appointments, information about snacks, or anything that requires a line or two to explain.

Online

Any messages or questions that occur when you are unable to talk to a staff member in person, or that come up after hours, can be sent in an email to: thechildrenscentre@yahoo.ca. This is a great method of communication for parents who are not often able to visit the centre during arrival and departure times, or parents who tend to be more "on-the-run" in their day-to-day routine. We will respond to email questions and inquiries as soon as possible.

Phone

Parents should always feel welcome to call The Centre and speak with us regarding day-to-day concerns, with questions about snack, or to report their child's absence. Please leave a message if your call goes unanswered -- The Centre is a busy place during the day and we may not always reach the phone in time. We will respond to your message as soon as possible.

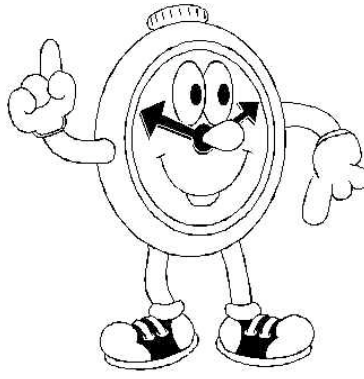
Pouches

In The Centre's entrance-way, you will notice that there are pouches, each labeled with the name of a child at The Centre. These pouches are used for child and family-specific communication from staff, communication from the board of directors, and other notices such as Scholastic book orders. Pouches are also a great way to communicate with other families and parents and share information on play groups, activities, or just to say hi! Please remember to check your pouch when entering and leaving The Centre.

Our Newsletter!

The Children's Centre's **parent newsletter** is published intermittently throughout the year. It is a source of information about Board activity, fundraising initiatives, the Centre's various committees and their duties, and all of the things that parents need to know about "the big kid stuff" involved in keeping our Centre up and running.

Be on the lookout for **our new, bi-weekly bulletin** that will be filled with information about "the little kid stuff". This handy bulletin will fill you in on our classrooms, our activities, exciting Centre news, as well as notes and reminders about the everyday get-up-and-go of the children and staff.



Backpack Contents

Because The Children's Centre is play-based, we get involved in a lot of paint, water, sand, and various other "messy", fun, educational substances. For this reason, it is best that children come to play in clothes that are more functional than fashionable.

The "function over fashion" philosophy applies for shoes as well, as the best shoes to play in are always the most comfortable: sneakers are best for indoor play, and for outdoor play: cozy winter boots for the colder months, and rubber boots for the spring thaw.

Each child should have a knapsack/backpack with at least one change of clothes (underwear, socks, t-shirt, pants) and an extra pair of shoes in the case there happens to be any play-related messes or the occasional bathroom-related one. It is also important to label your child's clothing and footwear to ensure that nothing gets lost or confused.

Younger children who are still wearing diapers or pull-ups should keep a small supply of their own in their backpack at all times. While The Centre keeps a supply of such things on hand, children are more comfortable in their own, and there may not always be a supply of their size/type on hand when needed.

Last but not least, sunscreen is usually associated with summer play, but a bottle of sunscreen is crucial for year-round play in our big new natural play space, and should be included in each child's backpack.

Arrival & Departure

Arrival time AM: 9:00
Departure time AM: 12:00pm

Arrival time PM: 1:30
Departure time PM: 4:30

Remembering and adhering to arrival and departure times is important not only because "that's when school starts!" or "that's when I go home!", but also because in order for your child to fully benefit from their program, it is important that they be present from beginning to end. Adhering to arrival and departure times also allows staff adequate time to prepare for the following session, which is necessary to maintain the quality of the programs.

Located near the door of each classroom is the sign-in/sign-out sheet for each group. It is very important to ensure that your child is signed in at the beginning of their session and signed out at the end. This is important not only because staff need to be sure that children are safe and accounted for, but also because it is provincial regulation that diligent records are kept of comings and goings. Perhaps one of the most important things to remember about arrival and departure at The

Centre is to ensure that an adequate list of parents, family members and friends are included on your child's Release Form (provided in the Registration Package). Staff can only release a child into the care of someone whose name and contact information are included on their Release Form, so it is always better to provide an exhaustive list in case of special or emergency circumstances. Names can always be added or removed from the Release Form upon parents' request.

Health Issues

Your child's health is of the utmost importance and as such, we do everything we can to ensure he/she is healthy while in our care. The medical information forms found in the Registration Package are there to ensure that staff have all of the required information to make informed decisions about your child's health, should they need to.

If your child becomes ill while at The Centre, staff will notify you immediately in order that you can arrange for them to be picked up and brought home.

If, while at home, your child shows signs of being ill such as diarrhea, vomiting, or fever, please have him/her remain at home until at least one day after symptoms have disappeared and/or they are no longer contagious.

If your child develops a communicable disease/infection, please inform the staff as soon as possible. Staff must inform all parents of any illness to which their child has been exposed so that necessary precautions may be taken. Information about the illness will be posted in The Centre to better inform parents of the symptoms, duration and severity of that particular illness.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome to The Children's Centre!

The 2010-2011 Board of Directors would like to welcome all children and families to The Centre for the new school year. This is an exciting year for The Centre, and our first September in our big new space at St. Mary's Church. The Children's Centre has been offering quality, play-based programs for young children for 42 years, and we're starting year 43 with fun new spaces and happy faces.

The Children's Centre's parent-run, community-based operation allows families a truly unique child care experience. Each year, a core group of volunteer parents participate in the overall running of The Centre. While children are learning and growing at The Centre itself, parents and other family members are volunteering their time to fundraising efforts, social events, Centre maintenance, financial administration, communications, and other Centre-related duties. The more dedicated the parents, the stronger the community relationships, the better the experience for everyone!

This year's Board would like to encourage all families to get as involved as they can at The Centre. There are many, many ways to get involved, and volunteer duties to suit every skill and talent among our diverse family base.

Once again, we welcome all families -- both returning and brand new -- to our 2010-2011 school year and we look forward to working together to make it our best year yet!

Sincerely,

The Children's Centre Board of Directors

Medication Protocol

In the case that your child has a prescribed medication that they must take during their time at The Centre, please ensure that you include with the medication exact written instructions that are signed and dated by one or both parents. Medications should always be kept in their original container and have the child's name clearly printed on it.

If your child is taking a particular medication at home, please inform staff and ensure that they are aware of any possible side effects that may occur.

Storm Closures

If The Children's Centre is closed due to bad weather conditions, announcements will be made on CBC and VPCM radio stations, and will be posted on The Centre's website. There will also be an updated message on The Centre's voicemail in the case of a closure. Parents should also note that The Centre follows the Metro School Board's actions in storm situations: if city schools are closed due to weather, The Centre is closed as well.

Toys from Home

We encourage children to leave their toys at home unless they are brought specifically to ease transition or to aid with separation anxiety. Occasionally, a child will ask if he/she can show a special toy to their friends, and



we will invite them to bring it to group time and tell their classmates about it, where it came from, and why they enjoy playing with it. If

a toy from home happens to make its way to The Centre, we ask that it is kept in the child's cubby for the duration of their session, to be picked up on the way home.

Birthdays

Often, parents will ask staff if they can bring something special for snack for their child's birthday. We welcome simple additions to snack in celebration of a birthday, and ask that parents consult with staff members about what



they would like to bring and how much will be needed for their child's class. We celebrate and talk about birthdays in our group times, and the children love to sing Happy

Birthday to their friends. At The Centre, we like to keep things simple and (a little) sweet!

Dates to Remember

September 7 Administration Day

September 8-9 Orientation Days

October 11 Thanksgiving Day
(Centre Closed)

October 12-15 Closed for staff related time off

November 11 Remembrance Day
(Centre Closed)

December 17 Last day for children before Christmas break

January 3 Centre opens after Christmas break

April 22 Last Day of School/Easter

May 2 School Reopens

May 23 Victoria Day

June 30 Last Day for Students