

LEARNING FROM PLAY EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated April 2022

Learning From Play Educational Foundation Parent Handbook 2023 - 2024

Table of Contents

LFP Vision and Mission Statements

LFP Values

Guiding Principles

What is Program Unit Funding?

Learning Teams

Individual Program Plans

What to Expect in Your Community-Based Programs

What to Expect in Learning From Play's On-site Program

Health Policy

Allergy and Seizure Policy

Inclement Weather Policy

Preparing for the School Year

VISION

For all families with children with additional support needs to have access to community-based, developmentally appropriate, and educationally relevant intervention for their child's preschool years.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide quality educational and developmental intervention to children with additional support needs in community settings.

To involve families in determining if educational interventions are functional and successful.

To partner with early childhood facilities and educate staff on best practices for working with special needs children in an integrated setting.

To train and mentor highly qualified staff to provide educational interventions to children, parents and staff.

VALUES

- Provide quality developmentally driven, education-based services to children in our care that creates measurable, real-life results
- Provide a supportive and collaborative environment for classroom staff
- Empower parents to take an active educational role in their preschool community

Our programming is based on the belief that all children can learn and we strive to coordinate appropriate learning experiences by adapting and modifying instructional strategies to help meet the identified learning needs of each child.

The focus of our program is to provide collaborative, educational and integrated services to children with special needs to support parents to choose community preschools for their children. We hope to increase acceptance of families of children with additional support needs and drive communities to rally around these families rather than isolate them.

Many families we work with indicate that it is difficult for their child to have playdates in their community. They are too worried to send their child to the neighbour's house for a playdate. What if he breaks something? What if he runs away? What if he hurts someone? What if he can't follow the instructions? What if the other children make fun of him or shun him? What if he has a tantrum? They are nervous to invite a peer over. What if they don't enjoy the playdate? What if any of the above happens?

Parents have reported that some community preschools and schools have indicated that “we do not have the resources to support your child in programming.” But what if we could provide those resources? If we could provide the support that busy teachers need to feel competent and qualified to teach each of these unique individuals?

Parents are savvy school shoppers now. Armed with information from numerous Facebook and social media sites, they are more aware of what other parents are being offered (or not being offered) and are eager to seek out the least restrictive environment for their children. Word of mouth is a powerful tool.

It is important that parents are treated as the “experts on their child’ and staff be recognized only as “experts in their field’. Parents have the final say on programming and implementation and they crave information, work hard and network to stay informed.

Our program aims to honour parents’ important role in their child’s development, while educating and supporting school staff (many of which have had limited access to Specialized Courses or Instruction) and making both parties feel supported to ask questions, have ideas and work developmentally, specifically and enthusiastically with each child.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We use the Guiding Principles within the Kindergarten Program Statement and curricular connections to ensure that children participate as active learners, build a shared set of experiences and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for subsequent learning.

Guiding Principles

- *Childhoods differ depending on social and cultural circumstances*
- *Children’s development is influenced but not determined by their early experiences.*
- *Children interact and learn in a variety of contexts*
- *Children are co-constructors of knowledge and partners in learning.*
- *Children are unique and active contributors to their learning.*
- *Children construct and represent knowledge in a variety of ways.*
- *Children are citizens and active participants in school and society.*
- *Children are active collaborators in and users of assessment.*
- *Children may require specialized programming and supports to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.*
- *Children and their families may need coordinated community services to meet their needs.*

WHAT IS PROGRAM UNIT FUNDING?

Program Unit Funding (PUF) is educational based funding provided by Alberta Education available to children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 6 years of age with special learning needs. Children are eligible to receive up to 3 years of funding with the 3rd year being their kindergarten year based on needs. Mild Moderate funding is available for up to 2 years. Children qualify based on specialized assessments or medical diagnosis.

LEARNING TEAMS

Each PUF funded child with Learning From Play will be assigned a Multidisciplinary Learning Team. The expertise and qualifications of a certified teacher on each team allows Alberta Learning to fund our program. The program teacher will develop, implement and oversee all programming and create and develop an Individualized Program Plan for each child in collaboration with families and team members. The members of the team will be assigned based on each child's individual needs and will include a Teacher, Speech Language Pathologist and Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLP-A). Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and Behaviour Support Consultants are available to join teams based on individual assessment.

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLANS (IPPs)

Each child will have an Individualized Program Plan. All school authorities are required to develop IPPs for children with special education needs. They are comprehensive written plans that reflect meaningful parental and learning team input and goals for the child. Parents will be given opportunities to add input through discussion, written parent input forms and team meetings throughout the year.

Reviews/IPP Meetings:

We will have 3 team IPP meetings per year. The first one in *November* will be devoted to discussion about the goals that have been set in your child's IPP.

The second meeting will be in *February* and will be devoted to discussing your child's progress on the goal areas thus far. The IPP is a working document so it can be added to anytime during the year. Goals may be continued or new goals may be added.

The year end meeting will be in *May/June* and will again be devoted to reviewing and discussing your child's progress over the year.

These meetings will take place over Zoom.

Transition Planning:

Strategies for supporting your child's transition to another year of programming, to a new school/grade or out of PUF funding are outlined. This is a year long discussion as many preschools and elementary schools begin registration and have open houses starting in February.

Transition planning will include, but is not limited to, updated SLP, OT and/or PT assessments and updated IPP. If your child is transitioning to a new school we welcome and will coordinate transition meetings with the receiving schools at your or the school's request and are happy to include anyone that would benefit your child in our year end IPP meeting.

What to Expect in Your Community-Based Programs

Support

- Your child will have an assigned Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLP-A) at daycare, preschool or school.
- These SLP-As may have been trained in the SLPA program at Grant MacEwan, or may have an undergraduate degree in Psychology or Linguistics and be pursuing experience to apply to a Masters program in Speech, or may have extensive Educational Assistant experience and additional training through our Contracted agency From Play to Words.
- Your child will have a certified teacher on his/her Learning Team.
- Your child will be assigned a Learning Team based on individualized needs. Once formed the members of the team will visit your child frequently at school/daycare and have regular communication with you. These teams will be assigned within the first couple weeks of programming and will reach out to you to introduce themselves.

Pre-Program Start

- If you are new to Learning From Play, you may be booked in for a happy visit in the office or via Zoom to meet the Director or other staff in June or July - these visits help us make good staff pairings for your child
- Your child's SLPA will be assigned in mid to late August, you will receive an email confirming the SLPA you have been assigned
- The SLPA will contact you the last week of August to book an initial play date with your child at your home. These play dates are usually 45 mins in length and are a chance for you to meet and exchange contact information with your

assigned SLPA. Your SLPA will have some questions prepared to learn more about your child

First Day

- Your SLPA will meet you and your child at the program on the first day
- Remember, you are required to arrange transportation for your child to the host Early Childhood program, the SLPA is not responsible for transporting your child
- If your child is anxious and the host program allows for parents to stay on the first day, families are welcome to do so until their child is more comfortable
- If you choose or are required to leave your child on the first day - our staff will send you some pictures to ensure you know that your child is having a successful start

Communication

- Each day your child attends community programming, you will receive an emailed contact note from your SLPA. These notes will share activities your child did at school, highlights, and therapy and education goals your SLPA worked on that day as well as any concerns that were noted>

Example:

Did I interact with friends?

Did I interact with teachers?

How much help did I need following the routine?

Did I go potty during school?

Did I eat a snack?

Learning Team goals (ie/Speech, fine motor, early literacy/math etc)

Other Notes

- Other members of the Learning Team will also be in regular communication with you. Some ways may include session notes, emails, texts, pictures, videos , phone calls, Zoom meetings and in person discussion.

Attendance and Illness

- There will be instances where children are unable to attend their PUF program site due to illness, family illness or vacation
- **We require as much notice as possible if your child will be away.**
- Please text or call your SLPA directly as soon as you know your child will be away for any reason (vacation, appointments, illness etc). **A minimum of 24**

hours notice is preferred. Thus, if you think your child MAY be away for any reason, please let your SLPA know as such the day or night before class.

- Should something come up the day of class (illness, emergencies etc) please text or email your SLPA directly by **7:00am** for morning programs and **10:00am** for afternoon programs.
- Your SLPA will work on preparation projects for your child recommended by your Learning Team (e.g. visual schedules, social stories, developing play materials and activities to support your child, communication with team) - it is preferable that they don't drive to your location due to a late notice absent notification from the family, as that will affect how much time they can spend on resources for your family that day
- There will also be instances when your SLPA will assist in other areas of our PUF program if your child is absent
- Please see the Illness Chart (attached) for more information on Attendance and Illness

Inclement Weather Policy

- Learning From Play values family safety in inclement weather. If driving conditions are dangerous, our one-to-one workers may not be able to attend your child's community placement. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Staff Professional Development Days

- At Learning From Play, we pride ourselves on being at the forefront of our respective fields in Education, Speech and Language, Fine Motor, Sensory, Feeding, Gross Motor, Positive Behaviour Support and Neurodiversity
- Because this is so important for the work we do with children we reserve **6 (Six) Staff PD days a year.**
- Our Staff PD will sometimes align with PD days in your school district
- When they do not align, families will be required to keep their child home if they require one to one support to manage their classroom as there will not be adult support available - these situations will be discussed on a case by case basis and families will be alerted in advance

Community Preschool Program Calendar

Our staff will run off each individual community preschool's calendar for holidays and non instructional days (with the exception of the above mentioned PD days that may conflict)

Daycare Calendar

As an education based program we will run off a school based calendar for holidays and non instructional days which may include Fall, Winter and/or Spring break. As we are aware that daycares typically do not take the same holidays parents will be notified in advance and each situation will be discussed on a case by case basis as it would for the PD days.

Toilet Training

- We are excited to work on toilet training with you if your child is not yet toilet trained!
- The OT will start with discussing some pre-readiness skills with you and working with you to do some tracking of when your child is currently voiding
- Family will collect the supplies needed (e.g. multiple pairs of underwear!)
- Then a process will be decided on and undertaken to maximize toilet training success
- If you are looking to toilet train your child this year we can't wait to work with you.

What to Bring

- Velcro shoes - we will be working on independence - so no shoelaces. Shoes should fit well but not fit tightly as we want the child to be able to insert their own foot.
- Large Child's Backpack - tiny backpacks are cute, but they don't hold all the crafts we want to send home to you! Also, in terms of independence they are VERY difficult for a child to put on over a winter coat
- Lunch kit - it's good practice for children to work on opening the zipper for a lunch kit and opening a variety of snack containers. This is great practice to build strong fingers!
- Water bottle - we want everyone to stay hydrated! Also water loading is a great strategy for success with potty training.
- Jacket with large zipper - ideally by the end of the year our children are engaging and zipping up their own zippers. But zippers come in all shapes and sizes, and some are easier than others. If you are looking for a new or new to you winter jacket for your child, look for:

- Larger zippers
- Zippers that are a bright colour compared to the jacket itself
- Zippers that don't "stick" as you are pulling them up - pull it up and down in the store first
- Zippers that are easy to engage at the bottom (the magnet bottoms are actually harder, not easier)
- Zipper that are not hidden by a flap (although we can work with you to pin the flap back as they are learning)

What to Expect in Learning From Play's On-site Program

Pre-Program Start

- Our program teacher will reach out to you in June to confirm the days and times of attendance for your child at our on-site program
- You will also receive a Welcome Letter prior to the Fall start
- The program runs out of our offices in Spruce Grove and Windermere
- Your child's Learning Team will be based onsite and will be closely connected to your child's community SLPA and will include 3 **Community Visit** weeks where our Onsite PUF Groups will be closed while our staff visits your child in their community setting. These will be pre scheduled and sent out with our school calendar.

Onsite Program Calendar

Our Spruce Grove onsite program will run closely to the Parkland School Division calendar. Our Windermere Location will run closely to the Edmonton Public School Division calendar. A year long calendar will be provided at the start of the year.

Daily Schedule

- The program day typically consists of:

Soft Start

Children come in and engage in some simple play activities, fine motor literacy and daily check ins as a way to ease into the day and be ready to learn.

Literacy/Numeracy Circle

Hello Song, greeting our friends, group book sharing opportunities/literacy development (read aloud, picture walks, turn taking, comprehension questions, connecting activities, sequencing), and early mathematics (colours, shapes, counting, number recognition)

Printing/Craft

Development of fine motor skills through activities like crafts, guided drawing and sticker play. Finger and hand strengthening, grasp. Colouring, drawing, painting, printing, cutting, gluing etc.

Free Play/Centers

Develop social play skills, learn through guided play, express themselves creatively through dramatic play, work on IPP goals, engage in one on one sessions with members of the multidisciplinary team.

Speech and Language Circle

Develop language through songs, actions and rhymes. Develop social skills and language through opportunities like Show and Tell, share experiences with peers.

Snack

Children learn functional skills such as washing hands, using the bathroom, opening containers, using utensils. They have fun and work on social language skills. Healthy snacks are encouraged to promote healthy bodies.

Gross Motor

Developing gross motor skills through activities targeting balance & coordination, core strength, jumping, throwing and catching.

Example Themes Include:

Rainbows, Food, Animals, Transportation, Chicka Chicka Boom Boom Letters and Numbers, Around The House and Community, Winter Sparkle, Fairy Tales, Bugs

Communication

- The program teacher will send home a newsletter at the beginning of each theme to share with parents the upcoming theme, songs, suggested books, crafts and activities to try at home to strengthen the targeted vocabulary, early literacy, numeracy, education skills, holidays and PD days.

Attendance

- In our ongoing effort to ensure that all of our students have the ideal level of support in place for them to be most successful, we ask that a parent or guardian please sign in to our Attendance App each day (at least 2 hours before the start

of class 7:30am for morning programs, 10:30am for afternoon programs) and indicate whether your child will be in attendance or absent from their group session that day. This also allows all team members to check in on attendance at any time.

Illness

- We are committed to the health and safety of all of our children and families. Many of the children we serve are at higher risk of complications from illness due to medical conditions and compromised immune systems. We ask that if your child is sick (please see the Illness Chart attached) that they rest at home and come back to us when they are feeling better.

Toilet Training

- The on-site program is also happy to continue your toilet training strategies and schedule with you to ensure consistency and work on comfort in public bathrooms

What to Bring

- Velcro shoes - we will be working on independence - so no shoelaces. Shoes should fit well but not fit tightly as we want the child to be able to insert their own foot.
- Large Child's Backpack - tiny backpacks are cute, but they don't hold all the crafts we want to send home to you! Also, in terms of independence they are VERY difficult for a child to put on over a winter coat
- Lunch kit - it's good practice for children to work on opening the zipper for a lunch kit and opening a variety of snack containers. This is great practice to build strong fingers!
- Water bottle - we want everyone to stay hydrated! Also water loading is a great strategy for success with potty training.
- Jacket with large zipper - ideally by the end of the year our children are engaging and zipping up their own zippers. But zippers come in all shapes and sizes, and some are easier than others. If you are looking for a new or new to you winter jacket for your child, look for:
 - Larger zippers
 - Zippers that are a bright colour compared to the jacket itself

- Zippers that don't "stick" as you are pulling them up - pull it up and down in the store first
- Zippers that are easy to engage at the bottom (the magnet bottoms are actually harder, not easier)
- Zipper that are not hidden by a flap (although we can work with you to pin the flap back as they are learning)

Health Policy

- Learning From Play follows all recommendations from Alberta Health Services and the Ministry of Education concerning communicable illnesses.

Allergy and Seizure Policy

- Learning From Play follows a specific allergy and seizure policy. If your child experiences seizures or is diagnosed with allergies please contact our teacher, Emily, at emilym@learningfromplay.com for further discussion.

Inclement Weather Policy

- Learning From Play values family safety in inclement weather. Our on-site program will be closed in dangerous driving conditions and on-line contact and services (e.g. Zoom) will be available. If driving conditions are dangerous, our one-to-one workers may not be able to attend your child's community placement. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

How to Prepare for the School Year

- The best way to prepare for the school year is with a positive attitude! Talk about school with excitement and that you can't wait to hear about their day playing with new toys and new friends and learning new things!
- Drive by the school with your child and point it out so it is familiar
- Take pictures on your phone of the school and the playground (even stay and play there!) so your child can share the picture with grandma, etc.
- Create a predictable and consistent daily 'before school' routine
- Ensure all reports (Glenrose PAS, Alberta Health, SLP reports), your completed registration form and your child's birth certificate are submitted to Learning From Play
- Reach out to your teacher with any questions and/or special information about your child


We are all looking forward to working together with you and sharing in your child's successes this year!

Illness Chart

At Learning From Play we understand that children may need to miss classes from time to time due to illness. Due to our commitment to the health and safety of all the children and families we serve, please refer to this chart when deciding on whether to send your

child to class.

I SHOULD NOT ATTEND GROUPS IF...

							
SEVERE COLD (Severe coughing, runny nose, changes in eating or drinking habits)	FEVER	VOMITING	DIARRHEA	RASH	HEAD LICE	EYE INFECTION	HOSPITAL (Stay and / or visit)
Within the past 24 hours	Temperature Of 100.4 or Higher	Within the past 24 hours	Within the past 24 hours	Body rash with itching or fever	Active head lice, itchy head	Redness, itching, and/or "crusty" drainage from eye	Hospital stay and/or ER visit

I AM READY FOR GROUPS AGAIN WHEN I AM...

Coughing is intermittent or infrequent (unless related to an underlying condition ie. asthma) Nasal mucus is clear	Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (i.e. Tylenol, Motrin)	Free from vomiting for at least 2 solid meals	Free from diarrhea for at least 24 hours	Free from rash, itching, or fever. I have been evaluated by a medical doctor.	Treated with appropriate lice treatment 24 hours or more ago	Evaluated by a medical doctor and treatment has been received 24 or more hours ago	Released by my medical provider to return to regular activities
---	---	---	--	---	--	--	---