



Policies & Procedures 2017-2018

Childspace is a unique early learning program located in Herring Cove, Nova Scotia offering ecocentric child-directed experiences in a small group setting to children ages 3-5. These experiences promote social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual learning through outdoor play and creative projects inspired by the natural environment.

Childspace is rooted in the belief that meaningful learning occurs when children can explore, ask questions, take risks, discover new curiosities, and create freely, and that this happens most richly through child-directed interactions with the natural environment. Providing a setting for this to occur, be supported, and enriched is the role of the educator.

Childspace experiences are offered twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 900AM-230PM and run from September 5th until June 28. Children can be registered to attend once or twice a week, but spots will be allocated dependent on need and demand.

Childspace does not run the last week of December, the first week of January, or during March Break.

Pedagogical Approach

Ecocentric Experiences Our connection to the natural environment is considered as much as possible in all aspects of Childspace. The children are invited through discussion, play, and materials to reflect on and nourish this relationship. Childspace experiences are either set outdoors or draw from the children's expressed interests inspired by the environment. Natural and recycled materials are presented as much as possible, and all materials are presented mindfully, with consideration of how much is used and the impacts of our use.

Process over Product The children are presented with materials to inspire their own creativity and experimentation. Focusing on process over product promotes the development of problem solving, critical thinking, imagination, creativity, confidence, and innovation. The educator is present to support children through this by giving assistance when needed, offering reassurance, asking questions, providing materials, sharing possibilities, and knowing when to step back.

Child-directed & Small Group Setting Childspace experiences are driven by the children. The educator may present the materials or space, but it is the children, both individually and collectively, who determine how they are used and where the experiences go. The experiences are always open-ended and emphasize process over product. Building an individual relationship with every

child, ensuring that they feel at ease, cared for, and respected, is essential to supporting their learning and as such, no more than 5 children are registered in Childspace each day.

The Whole Child Social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative capacities are deeply intertwined and of equal value to children's learning and development. Educating the whole child provides the strongest foundation for cultivating a positive relationship to self and learning. Childspace experiences promote the development of the whole child through child-directed outdoor play and creative projects inspired by the natural environment.

Drop-off & Pick-up

The program starts at 900AM and children should arrive as close to this time as possible, ideally between 900-930, however it is expected that sometimes circumstances or other engagements may cause families to require a later drop off time. If this is the case please call or notify Taylor as soon as possible with the time your child will arrive.

Pick -up time is between 200-230. If possible, please let Taylor know if your child will be picked up earlier. The occasional late pick-up is understood, however if children are regularly picked up late a late fee policy will be put into place.

Children can only be released to individuals on their pick-up list. If someone not on the list is picking them up please ensure that you provide verbal or written notification prior to pick-up time, if not the child will not be released until a parent/guardian is reached and gives consent.

Coming Prepared

Being in the natural environment is central to Childspace experiences and will always take place unless the weather is extreme and poses a danger to the children. Please check the weather the night before your child attends and ensure that your child comes dressed appropriately for the weather that day.

Every day children should have a full change of clothing, extra underwear/pull-ups in case of accidents, comfortable and safe footwear for being outside, and a blanket/comfort item if needed

On **warmer days** children should have a hat, water bottle, and sunscreen

On **wet days** children should have proper rain gear (rain suits are great!) and waterproof footwear

On **colder days** children should bring extra socks and mittens

Because there are only 5 children participating in Childspace each day, keeping track of personal belongings is made much easier. However mix-ups do still occur so it is recommended that you label all your child's belongings just in case. While the children are able to bring a comfort item if they wish for rest time, if it is something irreplaceable, please keep it at home and please do not send your child with any other toys from home, they will not need them.

Getting Messy

Getting messy is often the natural result of children exploring, creating, and learning freely and it is very likely that your child, and their clothing, will get messy while at Childspace. Stress or worry over getting messy can be a distraction and may impede their ability to fully engage in experiences. For these reasons please do not send your child in anything that you don't want to get messy.

Daily Routine

Much of the rhythm of the day is determined by the needs and interests of the children, however the general sequence of events are kept the same in order to provide the children with consistency, predictability, and balance.

900-1030 Morning Session: Inspiring Invitations

This first session serves to rouse the children's senses, inspire ideas, and help them through the drop-off transition. As children arrive they are greeted by a calming space and invited to explore a variety of carefully selected materials and play choices. Snack and water are accessible throughout this time. This session will end with a story and discussion, where the children can share and ask questions.

1030-1130 Into the Wild: Outdoor Play & Exploration

The children will next take their morning inspiration out into the natural world where they are free to explore, take healthy risks, collect materials, ask questions, and encounter new curiosities. Questions and suggestions will encourage them to directly engage with their morning inspiration. These experiences will take place on the property or off site in one of the many inspiring natural spaces in Herring Cove. If the children are going off site parents will be notified before hand.

1130-1230 Lunch & Reflection

The group will all eat lunch together picnic style and share their thoughts on the morning and what they might like to create in the afternoon.

1230-100 Rest & Relaxation

The children are encouraged to take time to rest their bodies and minds during this time. They can sleep if needed or engage in a calm independent activity of their choice.

100 -230 Afternoon Session: Inspired Creating

The afternoon session is for the children to work on a creative project of their choosing. The children may choose to work on the same project for multiple sessions or start and finish new projects daily.

The children can choose to collaborate, work independently, or a mix of both. Snack and water are accessible throughout this time.

Snacks & Lunch

Children are provided a snack twice daily while attending Childspace. Snacks and water are put at the children's level and available for them to help themselves to throughout the morning and afternoon. The children's input help inform snack ideas and they have the option of helping to prepare the snacks as well. As much as possible snacks are plant-based and use local seasonal ingredients as well as veggies the children gather right from the garden. Snacks are prepared to meet the dietary needs of all the children.

Families are asked to provide a balanced litterless lunch for their child and will be notified of any allergies in the group that must be considered. Lunchtime is a time for discussion and nourishment, where the children feel at ease sharing their thoughts on the day and enjoying their meals. Lunch is eaten picnic style and the children are encouraged to ask each other questions, using food as another avenue for exploration and learning.

Rest & Relaxation

During rest and relaxation the children are each given a yoga mat to stretch out on and can **bring a blanket and/or comfort item** from home if they would like. A calming atmosphere is created through music, dim lights, guided meditation, and quiet voices. The children can choose to rest, or engage in a quiet independent activity, such as drawing or reading a story book.

In the Bathroom

Children attending Childspace should be able to use the washroom independently or with minimal adult assistance, but of course accidents happen. During the day, the children are free to use the washroom whenever required, as well we take regular group trips to the bathroom during transition times.

Documentation

The children's day and learning process is documented through photography and field notes. These are shared with families through social media, email, and visual displays in Childspace created with the help of the children.

Open Communication

Feedback from families is crucial in providing an atmosphere that supports the whole child. Families are encouraged to share their ideas, ask questions, and give feedback in a respectful manner in person, through email, or over the phone.

Behaviours

Childspace is designed to provide an environment where the children are engaged, respected, feel cared for, have voice, and make choices. This type of environment creates a space where children naturally want to cooperate, resolve conflict, and work through strong emotions. The role of the educator is to be a consistent, caring, and compassionate presence, who sets reasonable boundaries to ensure the safety and well being of all the children. Building an individual relationship with each child and family helps to identify behaviors that are out of character, as well as form an understanding of why certain behaviors are occurring.

When behaviors come up that require support from an adult the following strategies are used:

- Determine the motivation: Why is the behavior occurring? What function does it serve?
- Ensure that children are engaged with materials and that materials presented are meeting the needs of the whole child (What are they telling you they need with their behaviors?)
- Adjust schedule if appropriate (Do they need more outdoor time? A longer rest time? More time to work on their creative project?)
- Provide redirection when necessary
- Ignore behavior and give space temporarily if appropriate
- Assist with peer-to-peer communication by listening, asking questions, and offering suggestions
- Offer support by giving choices, listening, and providing feedback

Illness

Children should not attend Childspace if they are ill. If a child is too ill to participate in the day, or is displaying any symptoms of illness, parents/guardians will be contacted to come pick them up. Children should return only once they are symptom free.

Medication

Non prescribed medication (such as Advil or Tylenol) cannot be administered to children while at Childspace. If your child requires prescription medication you will need to fill out a Medication Administration form. If your child requires medication to treat symptoms of a contagious illness please keep them home until they are symptom free.

****For children and family members with cat allergies, please note that Childspace is also home to two cats**

Emergency Protocol

Any minor accidents are treated by a qualified first aider on site and parents/guardians will be notified either by phone or at pick-up, depending on the severity. If there is cause for greater concern, a phone call will be made and parents/guardians can decide if they want to pick their child up at that time or have their child remain at Childspace.

Though incredibly rare, if a more serious accident occurs, 911 will be called immediately and then parents/guardians or emergency contacts. If the child requires transportation to the IWK Emergency Department by ambulance and a parent/guardian has not been reached, an emergency on-call support person will be contacted to stay with the other children until their parents/guardians arrive, and Taylor will accompany the child to the hospital. In the very unlikely event that the emergency support person is unavailable Taylor will stay with the other children until they are picked up and continue to try and reach the child's parents/guardians with a full update of the situation. Once all the other children are safely picked up she will proceed to the hospital and stay with the child until a parent/guardian arrives.

Payment & Fees

The cost of participation in Childspace is \$45.00 per day. Invoices are issued by the 15th of each month and payment is due before the first of each month. If needed, different payment schedules may be arranged. Payments can be made by cash, cheque, or e-transfer, and tax receipts are issued.

Payment for the first month must be received before your child's first day and please ensure that all fees are paid on time.

****Please note that fees are charged regardless of days missed due to illness, vacation or storm days**

Cancellation Due to Extreme Weather

If there is potential for extreme weather that could cause Childspace not to run either a cancellation or a warning email will be sent out the night prior noting that cancellation is occurring or is possible. Families will be notified of the final decision by text no later than 730 am on the day of. If Childspace is cancelled due to extreme weather, effort will be made to coordinate a make-up day that works for the majority of families.

Notice Of Withdrawal

Due to the small nature of Childspace , 4 weeks written notice, or payment for 4 weeks in lieu, is required if your child will no longer be attending.

After you have completed registration you will be invited to attend an informal open house where your family and child can meet Taylor & her family, see the space, and meet the other families & children who will be participating in Childspace. If you are unable to attend this event, but would like to come by for a visit prior to your child's first day, alternate arrangements may be made.