



GNAG Odyssey Tykes Program Statement

The program and curriculum at GNAG's Odyssey Tykes Summer Program for Preschool are guided by *"How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years"* (2014)(HDLH). This pedagogy has been implemented through the Ministry of Education as a professional learning resource for childcare workers and provides a fundamental framework, grounded in leading-edge research, for how we approach education. We provide an enriching and educational program that promotes inclusivity and cooperation in a fun and safe environment, while focusing on the types of environments, experiences, and interactions, which bring out the best in children, their families, and the educators. Learning through play is the cornerstone of our philosophy, and by demonstrating their interests and developmental needs through child-led activities; it allows children to be active and capable participants in the program content itself. Through observation and reflection, our educators are better prepared to create an environment that entices the curiosity of the children and fosters a lifelong love of learning.

The promotion of safety, healthy living, and nutrition is very important to GNAG. Everyday, during the Odyssey Tykes program, we will allocate time for children to eat a snack provided from home. Healthy food option suggestions and guidance can be provided to families should they request it. In response to potential allergens, no products containing nuts or sesame seeds will be permitted in the program.. Sanitary practices for all equipment, food preparation areas, as well as toys or other materials will be upheld.

To further promote the safety of children within the program, staff will carry cell phones with them at all times, especially when in the park outdoors. There is also an intercom system in the Tykes room that allows teachers to communicate with the office staff if necessary. In accordance with the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act (1997)*, a monthly fire drill procedure is also in place.

We strongly believe that the experiences had by the children, their parents, and the staff are greatly enhanced through the support of open, positive interactions. We strive to achieve this by creating a welcoming, "home-like" environment that fosters meaningful relationships and allows children to be themselves. We promote open communication amongst the children and staff through daily "sharing" time and acknowledge the children as being capable and

competent individuals. Staff consistently model appropriate behaviour and promote a feeling of mutual respect with the children by getting down to the child's eye level and engaging them in a manner which is developmentally appropriate.

Within the Odyssey Tykes' program, the staff prioritizes the social and emotional health of children by encouraging and modelling positive communication habits, and by providing the necessary tools for children to develop their ability to self-regulate. We achieve this by responding to children's emotional needs appropriately and consistently. Children are encouraged to discuss their emotions, and the staff supports them by providing the appropriate language whereby they can express themselves, or by leading children to develop solutions to issues they might be experiencing on their own.

Learning through play is an integral part to our program philosophy, and as such, the staff work hard to promote learning experiences that are led by the children themselves. We do this by playing with the children and using documentation tools that allows us to map their interests and needs. This allows us to set up activities that are responsive to these interests and create play centres that reflect the various individual needs and learning styles of the children. To stay current with these ever-changing trends, staff programming meetings are held on a regular basis.

Our program philosophy is anchored in the belief that all children learn differently, and therefore, it is imperative that our program offers a wide range of activities and experiences that caters to the individual needs of the children. The children's individual learning and development is further supported through open communication between the staff and parents as well. By taking a collaborative approach, we are able to create an environment that encourages, challenges, and empowers children to have an active role in their own learning.

As child-care providers, our ultimate goal is to create an environment where children feel safe and accepted, and where families feel that their needs and interests are being addressed and respected. By including children in the overall execution of the program, we create an environment where children feel they belong and have some ownership and input into the daily activities. One of the ways we achieve this is by designating daily duties to the children (hanging up coats and bags, clean up responsibilities, etc.), and by creating special "duty days" where children have the opportunity to help set up various activities taking place during the day (crafts, art, active games, etc.). Throughout all this, the staff are constantly tracking what the children are interested in, and how we can support their learning by capturing these interests through our program planning.

We also recognize that the families of the children are our greatest allies in support of creating the most successful program possible. Thus, it is essential that we maintain a strong level of communication with parents and caregivers to better understand what they are hoping to gain from the program and how we can further support their child's on-going learning. Staff are strongly encouraged to check in with parents on a daily basis, particularly at sign-out where we have an opportunity to discuss their child's day, talk about their experiences, or receive feedback about the program itself.

On a daily basis, the Odyssey Tykes room is divided into several play centres, supporting gross and fine motor skills, cognitive learning, as well as social and emotional development. Examples include but are not limited to, the block area, dramatic play centre, science and mathematical centres, free art table, as well as a cozy book corner. In order to keep up with changes in the children's interests and needs, the play centres are adapted or changed entirely on a weekly basis, or whenever the staff determines that changes are necessary. At any point during the program, and regardless of what other activities are taking place, children may go to the book corner for rest and quiet time as well.

At the Odyssey Tykes program, we also believe it is extremely important to have a strong balance of indoor and outdoor play, and to play outside as much as possible. Therefore, weather permitting, the program will make use of the park out front of the Glebe Community Centre for a minimum of 30 minutes per day or go over to the Mutchmor School park whenever possible.

As a program that is both a part of a community organization and utilizes space within a community building, we recognize that developing beneficial relationships with community partners is essential to the success of the program. Since the program takes place within a City of Ottawa facility, the Glebe Community Centre REC Supervisor and Facility Operator are our first line of contact with the City. Fostering a healthy relationship with these partners helps us to address any issues that might arise with the usage or physical aspects of the space itself, and to find solutions that are mutually beneficial and appealing to both parties.

During the school calendar months, the space is occupied by another licensed daycare program, the Glebe Cooperative Nursery School. As a shared space, the success of both programs is influenced by how we interact with and support each other. This relationship places us in a fortunate situation where we are able to share furniture and larger equipment, as well as cost-share purchasing for larger items. By sharing our program goals, we are also able to collaborate on how we set up the room, and how we can create an environment that mutually supports our program philosophies. This partnership also allows us to share updates in research regarding

child studies and legislation and develop awareness for staff development and training opportunities.

As learning is a lifelong pursuit, we consistently encourage and provide opportunities for staff to promote their own professional development. Whenever possible, we encourage all staff to attend relevant workshops or seminars and conduct annual in-house staff training prior to the start of each summer, where we re-assess our program and individual goals and focus on key areas of development as determined by the program coordinator and management team. Along with our regular programming meetings, team meetings are held where we discuss the needs of the children and the status of centre initiatives.

* The Odyssey Tykes program statement will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to align with the Minister's policy statement.

Status

The Odyssey Tykes is licensed (56895) by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and incorporated (000296173) as a non-profit organization under the Glebe Neighbourhood Activities Group (GNAG). GNAG is fully insured as required by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and the City of Ottawa's Recreation, Culture and Facility Services.

Document Review:

June 21, 2023 – Jason Irvine (Program Supervisor)