



Tykes & Tots

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE INC.

Forest School  
Parent Hand Book

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## MISSION STATEMENT, VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

### MISSION STATEMENT:

**To provide a nurturing environment for children to grow through educational play**

### OUR VALUES:

Our values guide our decisions and behaviours. Tykes and Tots values are:

<b>Respect for All</b>	<b>Creating Community</b>	<b>Integrity</b>
<b>Transparency</b>	<b>Healthy Practices</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>

### OUR PHILOSOPHY:

Early childhood experiences are a fundamental element in the development and growth of the child. Our philosophy incorporates quality care that emphasizes the principles of play and exploration. We provide a safe, warm, fun, loving environment that promotes the positive development of the child's physical, social, intellectual, creative, and emotional aspects. Accordingly, we are guided by the following concepts:

- Encouragement of individuality, creativity, and self-acceptance.
- Provision for a variety of experience.
- Encouragement of open-mindedness and respect for others.
- Maximization of parental involvement.
- Emphasis on community engagement and partnerships.
- Maintenance of health and safety.

We believe that these concepts are realistic and essential. We seek staff who are not only willing, but also eager, to be governed by them. It is necessary, further, to make certain that parents of children attending the program are familiar with them and with the sort of care their child will receive before their children are enrolled.

We realize that our programs may not be beneficial for every child and that there are limitations in what we can provide. Our intention is to support each family as best we can. Sometimes we are not capable of providing the necessary care. On other occasions providing that care may interfere with our responsibilities to other children at the program. In these cases, we may have to request that the parents make other arrangements for the care of a particular child. It would be equally wrong to jeopardize the safety, health and well being of other children entrusted in our care or to promise a service that we cannot adequately provide.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Tykes and Tots Early Learning Centre Inc. has 5 Early Learning Centres, 2 preschool programs, 3 before and after school programs, 1 school age summer program and 1 Forest School Program.

## ADMINISTRATION

Tykes and Tots is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors. At least 50% of the board members are parents with children attending our programs. The Board is elected at the Annual General Meeting. Board members hold their position for a minimum period of 1 year. Board responsibilities and authority is outlined in the by-laws of the organization. The members of the non-profit corporation are parents with children attending the programs. All members have voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting and in this way are able to participate in the decision-making processes of the organization. The Executive Director is a non-voting member of the Board of Directors.

## WHAT IS FOREST SCHOOL?

Forest School (FS) is an educational approach that has existed worldwide since the late 1950s, with over ten thousand Forest School programs in the UK alone. FS is known by many different names such as Nature Kindergartens, or Outdoor Schools, etc. and can take many different forms. Some programs are offered to students half a day per week, or up to a fulltime basis. Connecting children to natural spaces in many different climates, in urban parks, adjacent to schools, or outdoor classrooms, playgrounds, forests, meadows, or beaches.

Forest School programs follow two guiding principles:

- 1) Regular and Repeated Access to a natural space.
- 2) Child directed, emergent and inquiry-based learning.

The defining feature of this type of nature-based education program is that children are provided with opportunities to build an on-going relationship with the land, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves through this educational lens.

Program elements include wilderness skills including the teaching of tools (i.e. whittling knives, saws, hammers, nails etc.), making campfires and building simple shelters. All these activities are taught with appropriate adult supervision and with emphasis on teaching children how to safely use tools and campfires, etc. Program elements also include identification of different trees and plants as well as identification of animal tracks, nests etc. and focuses on developing an appreciation and respect for nature in all forms.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Food Policies:

#### Nut-Free Zone

Due to the prevalence of life-threatening nut allergies, we ask that participants refrain from bringing nuts to Forest School. Soy and sunflower seed substitutes for nut butters are welcome.

### **Snack-Sharing**

In addition, we ask that participants do not share or trade snacks, as this ensures the health, safety, and happiness of the community.

### **Garbage-Less Snacks**

We encourage participants to try to bring a garbage-less snack. At the same time, we ask that parents/caregivers consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which their child's snacks are packed. At FS we seek to empower even our youngest participants to carry their own snacks and water bottles on our adventures, which is totally possible with small containers.

### **Handwashing and Drinking Water**

Participants will be asked to wash their hands with soap and warm water before eating at FS. They will also be able to refill their water bottles on site.

### **Emergency Procedures and First Aid:**

Tykes and Tots Forest school has written emergency procedures with which all educators and volunteers are familiar. A copy of the procedures, including emergency phone numbers, is always carried by an educator/volunteer in the emergency/first aid backpack. The emergency/first aid backpack is equipped with such things as various sizes of bandages, antiseptic wipes, eye wash, anti-allergy medication, whistle, and hypothermia blanket.

### **Medication:**

Educators will not administer medication at the program, other than required emergency medication such as an asthma inhaler or EpiPen. Parents are asked to complete a medication form and educators will fill out the form any time medication is administered.

### **Risk Management:**

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Forest School, and indeed of healthy child development. Tykes and Tots Forest School educators and volunteers endeavour to co-assess and co-manage risk with participants, believing this to be an essential skill for children to acquire. FS educators and volunteers conduct seasonal site risk assessments, as well as activity risk assessments and individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis, always considering the balance between risks and benefits when doing so.

Some of the risks inherent to Forest School and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools such as whittling knives
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire
- Contracting poison ivy
- The presence of wild animals and ticks
- Inclement weather

### **Illness and injury:**

Children ill with high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash with no known cause are not allowed to

attend the program while displaying signs of illness. If a child has a contagious illness, doctor's recommendations should be followed in terms of exclusion from the program. In the event of a pandemic or other public health emergency, exclusion from the program due to illness will be guided by Public Health directives.

Parents will be informed of any minor injuries that happen while at FS and a minor injury report will be completed. Parents will be contacted to pick their child up in the case of illness that occurs during program hours or injury requiring medical attention.

## **FOREST SCHOOL STAFF**

### **Participant Ratios:**

The ratios between Tykes and Tots Forest School educators/volunteers and participants vary depending on the age of the group of participants and the adults accompanying them.

The maximum ratio of preschool-aged children to FS educator/volunteer is 5:1

The maximum ratio of school-aged children to FS educator/volunteer is 10:1.

There will always be a minimum of 2 staff on site.

The FS supervisor is a certified Forest School Practitioner and certified ECE (early childhood educator). All other staff are required to have ECE certification. All staff are required to have valid First and CPR and a criminal record check with vulnerable sector search.

### **Staff Responsibilities:**

The responsibilities of an FS educator/volunteer are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring the physical safety of participants by co-assessing and co-managing risk with them on an ongoing basis such that participants feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world.
- Considering the social and emotional safety of participants and endeavouring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur.
- Modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as the tools and supplies at FS.

## **PARENT/CAREGIVER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents/caregivers are responsible for:

- Ensuring all forms and fees are submitted electronically prior to your child's attendance at one of our programs.
- Ensuring your child is equipped with the proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies for the season and length of the program (please see the Supply List that follows).
- Providing FS staff with any information that would assist us in meeting the needs of your child.

- Following all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

## Preparing for Forest School - Supply List:

Children will need rain-suits, boots, extra warm clothing, waterproof/warm snowsuits, extra hats and mitts, hiking shoes, sneakers, thermal wear, etc. For cold weather please consider following factors in dressing children:

- **Insulation:** Natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as well as fleece. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate the skin with a breathable layer to keep them warm.
- **Middle Layer:** This is another insulation layer that creates ‘dead-air space’ between your child’s skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping your child warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.
- **Outer Shell:** Waterproof and wind-proof, as well as breathable.

### Winter:

- Two winter hats [must cover ears and stay on the head]
- Balaclava or neck warmer [no scarves please due to risk of strangulation]
- Two pairs of warm, waterproof mitts
- One warm, waterproof snowsuit
- One set of warm, waterproof boots
- Three base layers: thermal shirt and pants, middle layer, wool/fleece sweater [cotton is not ideal for cold weather conditions]

### Spring:

- Rain gear [waterproof boots, pants, jacket], with extra insulation on colder days
- Sneakers for running [please no open toe shoes even in summer]
- Sun Hat [for warmer months]
- Warmer sweater or jacket for colder days
- Bug Jacket

### Summer:

- Rain gear [waterproof boots, pants, jacket]
- Sneakers for running [please no open toe shoes even in summer]
- Sun Hat [for warmer months]
- Lightweight clothing [silk/cotton ideal, synthetic fibres do not breathe well]
- Bug Jacket

### Fall:

- Rain gear [waterproof boots, pants, jacket]
- Sneakers for running [please no open toe shoes even in summer]
- Sun Hat [for warmer months]
- Warm Jacket [fleece or other breathable fabric ideal]
- Bug Jacket

### All Seasons:

- Small backpack
- Snacks

- Water bottle
- One extra changes of clothes [including underwear and socks]

You don't have to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child warm. Thrift stores are great places to look for children's wool clothing at cheaper prices.

When it comes to boots you should get a boot that is one size larger than your child's foot. Again, this creates dead-air space to assist in insulation. Socks help to wick moisture away from the skin, (please note cotton tends to sweat and doesn't do a great job at wicking moisture). The best foot insulator would be two pairs of wool socks with waterproof boots that have wiggle room.

For warmer weather we ask that your child has a light cotton/silk/hemp long sleeve shirt on for the day. Children are required to wear a hat at all times. Our programs are altered slightly by following the position of the sun. It is amazing how cool it is when towering trees shade the walking paths.

Children will be encouraged to stay hydrated for both cold and warm weather as this will assist in regulating body temperatures. Please see us for further recommendations on staying comfortable throughout all weather conditions.

### **Child Entry and Release Policy:**

Parents must give Tykes and Tots Forest School written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e. a relative who picks up child, emergency contact in cases where parents cannot be reached). If written authorization is not possible, the parent must phone us to give verbal authorization. Parents must notify us before changing the usual pick-up routine. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.

### **Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure:**

If someone other than a parent/authorized alternate pick-up person arrives to pick up a child and we haven't been notified in advance by the authorized parent or pick up person we will:

- Call parent for verbal authorization.
- If parent cannot be located, the child is **not** allowed to leave until a parent has been contacted.
- FS staff will remain with the child until an authorized pick-up person arrives.

### **Custody and Access to Children:**

It is Tykes and Tots ELC Inc. policy not to become involved in custodial disputes if parents using the program separate or become involved in legal proceedings over custody of children and visitation rights. Tykes and Tots will follow the directions of a court order regarding visitation rights of a non-custodial parent. Should no court order be in effect, both parents will be considered to have custodial rights and will have full access for drop off and pick up of the child.

If both parents enter into a contract for childcare while living together, and then separate, we



will ask both parents to each enter into a new contract with the program unless a court order is in place in which case we will follow directives from the court.

As a childcare organization, we cannot override parental rights. Unless a court order is in place, we cannot refuse a parent access to their child. Also, unless a court order is in place, parents always have the right to authorize any person to pick up or drop off their child.

### **Release of Children to a Person Who Appears Intoxicated/Impaired:**

Staff members are legally responsible to protect the children in their care from any perceived risk. Staff will not release a child to a person who appears intoxicated or impaired. In such cases, staff will assist in making other pick-up arrangements (i.e., a spouse or other authorized person). If the apparently intoxicated person insists on leaving with the child, the police will be contacted.

## **EXTREME WEATHER POLICY**

Educators and volunteers at FS consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making (i.e. how far to venture away from the school, how long to be outside).

In the case of predicted thunder and lightning, FS educators/volunteers will ensure participants are close to shelter so that it may be sought quickly should thunder and lightning occur. During thunder and lightning, participants will stay under shelter (in the school).

In the case of extreme cold (-25C or below) or extreme heat (30C), FS educators/volunteers will limit participants' length of exposure based on age/outerwear, and will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of frostbite, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, etc.

## **GENERAL COMMUNICATION**

Tykes and Tots uses the HiMama app to communicate daily activities, upcoming events, and developmental progress. This convenient app can also be used for two-way communication between parents and FS staff to stay in touch. Enrolled families will receive contact information for both the classroom and the program supervisor. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

FS staff are also available for brief "check-ins" during pick-up/drop-off times and are happy to share the day's highlights with you, though their priority will always be on participants during that time. If you would like to have a longer or more focused conversation with FS staff, please do not hesitate to communicate via email using the HiMama app or to set up an in-person meeting time.

## **Emergency Communication:**

In the event of an emergency at FS involving your child, parents/emergency contact people will be contacted by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) has been contacted. The Executive Director and Board Chairperson will be notified of any emergency situations.

## **PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

Tykes and Tots follows the Ministry of Education's Early Learning Program Guide which is a play and exploration-based curriculum. This emergent curriculum philosophy focuses on the holistic development of the child, including the social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional aspects. Activities are focused around the children's interests and include art activities, music, literacy, math concepts and play invitations. Project work follows the children's interests and can lead to development of many different interest areas. Examples of a project include gardening, dinosaurs, space, trains, bugs, or any other area of interest that catches the children's attention.

Tykes and Tots Forest School follows the same philosophy but just done outside in a natural urban forest. Emergent curriculum allows us to follow the child's lead, ask questions together and to look for those answers in a meaningful way. We believe that children are capable and competent to follow their own interests and expressing themselves through play. True free play is a fundamental part of how a child makes sense of their world and to increase social and emotional skill development, self-regulation skills and communication skills.

## **Guidance Practices:**

Developing emotional control and self-regulation is an important part of growth and development in the early years. Educators will use positive guidance methods to redirect behavior, teach social skills and assist with the development of empathy and impulse control. Educators will discuss any challenging behaviors with the child's parents/guardians. The goal of the discussion will be to find positive solutions for the child.

If the child's behavior is overly disruptive for the class or creates an unsafe situation for the child or other children, the educator and program supervisor will schedule a meeting with the parents/guardians to discuss possible solutions. In the event of extreme cases, the family may be asked to remove the child from the program.

## **Absences:**

Each family enrolled with us will be provided with the a phone number in order to contact the FS staff. Please call and let us know if your child will be absent from class for any reason.

## **A typical day:**

Every day at FS looks differently based on the community present, the children's interests, the season and the weather, and the various loose parts found or introduced at the site. Participants can be sure that they will settle into the day through free play and exploration. This might mean creating a village for the fairies that live in the forest or looking inside the logs to find interesting

creatures or creating an art project from the objects from nature.

Participants are encouraged to find a sit spot to become centered in their natural surroundings and think about what they want to do that day, or to reflect on what they have done that day. We will have group meetings to plan our day and see what we want to explore or learn about. We will often have stories to tell or to read, make art, singing, dancing, exploring. Every day will be different, but the main element is to build relationships with each other and the environment.

### **Role of the Educator:**

Being a co-conspirator in play means is to add materials to spark different ideas and to create teachable moments by asking open ended questions. Most times it just means to sit back, observe, take notes, write stories, and listen to what the children are doing, stepping in only when needed, where they may require more materials, or encouragement with a new risky step. This requires the educator to take on different roles:

- The architect – planning, setting up the environment and changing it up.
- The observer and researcher – using the observations to plan new ideas.
- The prop manager – adding and taking away of materials to extend the play.
- The coach and mediator – seeing what each child is capable of and knowing when to step in and help with problems or helping them master a skill.
- The collaborator – learning alongside the child.
- The storyteller – making their learning visible.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

One of the many special features of Forest School is that sessions are held in the same area of an urban forest over an extended period of time allowing participants to become very comfortable in and knowledgeable about the area.

We believe that it is only through a deep connection to place that children grow up to be stewards of the land. We therefore strive to meet a delicate balance whereby we promote children's connection to nature through exposure and meaningful experience, while at the same time fostering an ethic of care and sustainable use of the land we are connecting to as a whole. We focus on creating a positive environment for learning, while avoiding adverse environmental effect due to over-use of an area. We minimize environmental impacts by rotating our sites for play, staying on trails as much as possible, and keeping activities with the highest impact inside. We also strive to maintain a "what we bring in we bring out" rule. This reinforces the principal of zero or minimal environmental footprint.

At Tykes and Tots Forest School, environmental sustainability is at the heart of our motivation for running programs. We therefore conduct ongoing ecological impact assessments of our presence in the forest, including such factors as denudation/erosion, compaction, pollution, and the corruption/introduction of species. We have created a plan for the monitoring, management and limitation of our potential negative impact and for the positive development and improvement of the ecology of our site.

## TYKES AND TOTS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE INC. BYLAWS

### NAME

The name of the Corporation is “Tykes and Tots Early Learning Centre Inc.”

### PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The principal office of the Corporation shall be 1055 Hampton Circle, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7R 0G7.

### INTERPRETATION

In these bylaws “Corporation” refers to Tykes and Tots Early Learning Centre Inc.: and word or expression used, but not defined, has, unless the context otherwise requires, the same meaning as in *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995* (of Saskatchewan).

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To maintain and operate high-quality childcare programs which include:

- An emphasis on early childhood education.
- A safe, warm, fun and loving environment.
- The promotion of the positive development of the child’s physical, social, intellectual, creative and emotional aspects.
- Encouragement of individuality, creativity and self-acceptance.
- Introduction to a variety of experiences.
- Encouragement of tolerance, open-mindedness and respect for others.

### MEMBERSHIP

There shall be one class of Regular Members, consisting of any parent who has a child or children enrolled in the organization, the members of which shall be entitled to one vote per family at all meetings of members. Expulsion of membership shall be within regulations of the Act pertaining to Non-Profit Corporations.

### THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At least 50% (one-half) of the Board of Directors shall be members of the Corporation.

#### *Section 1 – Election of the Board of Directors:*

- Each position shall be filled by election by the membership at large.
- Each member may vote once for each number of positions to be filled.
- Each of the Directors on the Board shall be elected to hold office:
  - until the date of the next Annual General Meeting
  - until the Director’s earlier resignation, or
  - until the Director’s removal or disqualification whereby a resolution regarding that Director’s removal from office requires a simple majority vote of the members present at the meeting.

*Section 2 – Board of Directors:*

The Board of Directors shall consist of no less than 4 and no more than 8 members.

The positions available are:

- Chairperson
- Vice-chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Member at Large – 4 positions

The Chairperson shall preside over all general meetings and all directors' meetings of the Corporation. In the Chairpersons absence or other inability to act, the Vice-chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson.

The Board of Directors shall determine the duties and responsibilities of each Director. The Board may, from time to time, appoint from among their number any committee they deem advisable.

*Section 3 – Vacancies on the Board:*

The Board may appoint from the membership at large a replacement for any vacancy on the Board for the term remaining until the next Annual General Meeting provided the term is greater than two months. At no time shall there ever be less than four directors.

*Section 4 – Director's Meetings:*

- A majority (a majority being at least 50% plus one) of all Directors holding office upon the date of a meeting of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of deciding all questions.
- The Directors shall meet no less than six times per year but may meet at any regular times set by them.
- A one-week notice will be given prior to any special meeting called for to accommodate any circumstance that may arise and have to be dealt with before a regularly scheduled meeting.
- Any special meeting called where a one-week notice cannot be given will require a quorum of members as set out in Section 4 paragraph (a) of Bylaw VI.
- A Director shall attend at least four of the six meetings annually.
- A Director shall not miss any more than two consecutive meetings.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

An Annual General Meeting shall be held within every 12-month period and no later than 13 months after incorporation.

- The Annual General Meeting shall be held no later than 90 days after the end of the fiscal year of the Corporation and notice of the time and place of the Annual General Meeting shall be sent, not less than 15 days and not more than 50 days, before the meeting, to each voting member, and the directors.
- A regular general meeting of members may be held twice annually.
- At any General Meeting quorum shall be constituted by 25 members who must be present at the opening of the meeting for the purpose of deciding all questions.

- A Special General Meeting may be called anytime by:
  - Any Board Member, or:
  - Five percent of the membership providing a notice of the meeting has been given to all members by and within 21 days of the said meeting.
- Except where the bylaws otherwise provide, members shall vote:
  - By show of hands, or
  - Where a majority of the members who attend the meeting so demand or the Chairperson or the meeting deems it advisable, by secret ballot.
- No member shall be entitled to more than one vote.
- Members may, at any Annual or General Meeting, amend, enact, repeal, replace or confirm any bylaw that regulates the activities and affairs of the Corporation:
  - Providing such amendment, enactment, repeal, replacement, or confirmation has been forwarded to each member and clearly indicated together with the notice of the meeting at which the enactment, amendment, repeal, replacement or confirmation is to be considered, and
  - By a two-thirds majority of the votes cast at the meeting.

#### FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

- The fiscal year of the Corporation shall end of the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December in each year.
- A copy of the Annual Financial Statement shall be made available to all members at an Annual General Meeting.
- Where an Auditor is required in respect to Government Grant Regulations, such Auditor must be appointed at an Annual General Meeting.
- The Directors shall place before the General membership an audited or reviewed financial statement for the year ended not more than 90 days after its conclusion.
- A monthly Financial Statement shall be presented at all Directors meetings and shall be available to all members if so requested.
- All cheques will require the signature of two of the four persons designated by the Board of Directors to have signing authority.
- Each year, at least two months prior to the commencement of the fiscal year, a budget setting forth details of the estimated revenues and expenditures for the Corporation for the ensuing fiscal year shall be prepared and submitted to the directors for approval.

#### WINDING UP

Upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Corporation, the remaining property of the Corporation shall, after payment of all debts and liabilities, be transferred to such persons as are permitted pursuant to subsection 209(4) of *The Non-Profit Corporation Act, 1995* (of Saskatchewan), or any subsequently enacted section in substitution therefore as exists at the time of the liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Corporation as may be designated by a majority vote of the Members of the Corporation.