



Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham

2023 Annual Report to the Community



Our Mission

To provide best in class, responsive, inclusive programs and services for children and families.

Our Vision

Children will have a strong foundation to meet their full potential.

Our Values

Belonging

We acknowledge and value the individual perspectives, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas of others and create spaces for everyone to belong

Collaboration

We foster meaningful partnerships and collaborations to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve

Innovation

We proactively seek unique ways to create and adapt to change, to inspire the healthy growth and development of others



We honour, recognize, and respect this nation and Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live, work and play. Let us acknowledge the land where we are located is land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among the Mississauga Peoples and is the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Miigwetch.

Diversity Statement

At Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham we respect the rich diversity of our families, our employees, placement students, volunteers, and partners. We recognize that these individuals represent all dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, family structure, age education, physical and cognitive ability, and socio-economic status. Everyone brings with them a unique set of perspectives, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas. This diversity continuously challenges us to reflect on our practices and strive to do better. We fundamentally believe that all individuals should feel welcome in our spaces and should always be treated equitably. The experiences of families, employees, placement students, volunteers and partners will be free from discrimination.





Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham: Cultivating the Leaders of Tomorrow

Message from Lisa Rankin, Executive Director

As we head into our 40th year of serving the children and families of Durham region, I am inspired by the countless childcare professionals, past and present, who have passionately invested their time to create positive change. As a parent, and a childcare professional, I know that high-quality early learning and childcare experiences depend on educators who “show up.” I know that educators who are **present** in the children’s learning, who are **well trained** and **educated**, and who are **responsive** to the unique needs of children & families create a strong foundation for children to thrive. I am both appreciative and humbled by the childcare professionals who commit to this important work everyday.

As one of the largest multi-service early learning and childcare organizations across Durham region, we applaud the government’s commitment to deliver on a high-quality, inclusive, accessible, and affordable childcare system (CWELCC). We also remain committed to advocating for an engaged workforce that is respected for their work as professionals. We know that the success of the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care is reliant on this.

I also know that the success of our organization, and our ability to deliver on our mission within the community depends on strong leadership at the centre-level and administrative & program support from our professionals at our head office location. I would like to acknowledge and thank this team of leaders for their important contribution and dedication.

In 2023, our Board of Directors worked with our senior leadership team to develop our new 4-year Strategic Plan with an update to our mission, vision, and values. This innovative plan focuses on the three key strategic priorities of People and Culture, Program Excellence, Growth & Expansion and Community Development. While we are in the beginning stages of implementation, our Annual Report to the Community highlights some of our early successes! In addition to this planning, our board volunteers provide their experience, knowledge, and guidance throughout the year and are a valuable resource. I would like to extend a warm thank you to the SPC Board of Directors!

Message from Nelson Loureiro, Chair of the Board of Directors

As I complete my second year as Chair of the Board of Directors, I couldn't be prouder of the entire Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham team and board members. I am so encouraged by the future of this organization, and its importance in the communities it serves.

This team, including all our childcare professionals, have really managed every challenge, opportunity and change that has arisen over the last few years and not only "managed" but grown and excelled throughout it all.

The new Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program has come with its challenges and learnings but has created an opportunity for families and operators alike. I am encouraged by the commitment government has taken to ensuring equitable, sustainable, and accessible childcare as an important pillar of economic growth. In this, I am so proud of the leadership in Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham and the Board in looking future-forward and developing a 4-year strategic plan. This will really guide our work as we look to continue to grow as an organization, learn and continuously improve.

You truly have a "special sauce" here at Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham and I encourage all of us to continue to harness that and do great things together.



Thank you to our SPC Board of Directors!

You have contributed your time, talent, and experience through 2023 to help advance our mission and to support the diverse needs of the children and families within the communities we serve!

Jamie Bishop
Sharan Brar, Board Secretary
Poonam Dewan
Patrick Farrell, Vice Chair
Nelson Loureiro, Chair
Sanjay Sarkar, Treasurer
Damion Scott
Karen Tsang

Lucia Perri
Supervisor, Elsie MacGill PS



I always knew I wanted to work with children, but I wasn't sure in what capacity. My sister-in-law was an Early Childhood Educator with Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham (SPC), and as a high school student, I had the opportunity to visit her program. The visits became more and more frequent, and I found I genuinely enjoyed being in the environment and "hanging out" with the children. I helped set up activities, read stories and *I started to feel like I truly belonged there.*

I continued my post secondary education at George Brown College in the Early Childhood Education Program. I loved every class and every placement... I had found my true passion.

This year will mark my 35th year with SPC.

I have worked in every age group and currently work as a supervisor of our Elsie MacGill PS location. Children are smart, funny, honest, challenging and I've had some of my best conversations with 3- and 4-year-olds. The children who have been in my care have touched my heart and impacted my life in so many ways.

I have found my passion working with children. The smiles and laughter are contagious. My heart swells when I hear a child call "Chia" across a room or down a hallway. Knowing I have played a role in the growth and development of young children is extremely rewarding.

It gives me a sense of pride to know that I have had an impact on a child's life and helped guide/educate them to achieve their goals. I value the bonds I have created with both children and their families over the years. I have families that I keep in contact with today.

What would you like the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education to consider as they move forward with the implementation of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care system?

Affordability for high-quality childcare is a great plan. However, they should consider the extensive waitlists and how the system is going to support families to get the care they need for their children. Making promises of spaces with not enough educators available to work gives false hope, causes confusion and upset, and puts childcare in a position to look weak.

Members of the Provincial Government need to increase their knowledge about the role of an Early Childhood Educator and understand the professional standards at which we are held. Without this understanding, and an intentional focus on addressing workforce challenges, our current Early Childhood Educators will be burned out and there will continue to be a lack of qualified educators. Incentives must be put in place to attract people to stay in the field. Early Childhood Educators are professionals that need to be valued and appreciated.

I have been with Schoolhouse Playcare for *almost a wee two months*! I love having conversations with children. Children are full of ideas and I'm here to listen to all of them!

Working as an Early Childhood Educator promotes a healthy lifestyle for myself: socially, emotionally, and cognitively. I get the opportunity to re-evaluate my pedagogy for the world of today.

The art of collaboration is a skill I get to exercise everyday. Collaborating with the children, their families, my colleagues, and community resources reminds me that there is a lot of possibility when we work together.

My advice to someone considering a career as an Early Childhood Educator would be that with the introduction of the CWELCC program in Canada, there is more appreciation for this profession. Since Covid-19, I feel that there has been more recognition and respect for this field of work. Having said this, I am hopeful of a positive trajectory that the governing bodies will support the needs of RECE's.

I am happy to see that in preparation for new licensed childcare spaces, the Government of Ontario has recognized the talent gap for leadership and supervision in the workforce. To support the educational gap, the government of Ontario is providing various Grant Assistance Programs for aspiring ECE's as well as professional development opportunities for those already in the field.

What is one of the funniest things a child has said to you?

This question is too tricky! I will default to... any "knock, knock" joke. Children truly believe it's the funniest thing ever. Which makes me think that it's really funny too!

What would you like the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Education to consider as they move forward with the implementation of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care system?

The CWELCC program is a fundamental priority for childcare. Increasing the number of licensed childcare spaces is important, and so is a high-quality workforce. This is what makes a safe and successful experience for all (children, families, resource personnel and educators).

Without hesitation, following through on the commitment to increase the wage floor, and continuing to look at a model that compensates Early Childhood Educators appropriately is important to recruit and retain RECE's. Wage increases promote an incentive to practice the profession as a growing career path.

Rehanna Giorgio
RECE, Whitby Shores





Strategic Priority: People and Culture

We will continue to invest in our workforce, position our organization as an “employer of choice” and advocate for our childcare professionals to be recognized by the public, and all levels of government, for the scope and complexity of their critical work.



378
employees

81
new educators
mentored through
their first 6 months



47%
Registered
Early Childhood
Educators



3,816
professional
learning hours



7 partnerships with
colleges/universities

1 partnership with
employment centre

9
career
fairs

Creating a Sense of Belonging

At Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham, we know how important it is to create a sense of belonging for our new team members. We know that the experiences they have from the onset, and through their first six months, influence their level of engagement and their decision to stay!

Our Specialist of Recruitment, Onboarding and Mentoring is the first point of contact for new team members and ensures a thoughtful and personal approach to their onboarding and mentoring experience. This includes being available to answer questions, creating early opportunities for networking and learning, conducting in-centre “check in” visits and encouraging feedback within the first three months.

So, what are our surveys telling us?

- New employees are happy with the orientation and training they are provided
- They feel a sense of belonging and report feeling welcomed right away
- They are happy with the on-the-job training they are receiving from their supervisors and teams
- They are eager for more networking and training opportunities and are excited to learn

We are so excited to see the positive results of this early experience for employees – and we are seeing the benefits!

This focus has resulted in:

- An increase of employment referrals
- Summer students who want to return
- More people wanting to participate in apprenticeship programs

Not only that – we are getting noticed...

At career fairs, potential candidates are commenting that they have heard great things about us – and want to know how to get started!



“The transition was so smooth, I love it here. Everyone’s been a great help and I didn’t feel like I had just started, I feel like I’ve know them all since forever. My heart is so full. Thank you for this opportunity.”

– Marzia

Igniting a Passion for Professional Learning

Our first annual Easter Monday conference was a HUGE success! Over 200 educators showed their commitment to their own professional development and gathered for a day of learning, networking, and impactful guest speakers.

We welcomed Matthew Rico who has over 11 years of clinical experience in mental health nursing, over 8 years teaching non-violent crisis intervention, and has delivered Mental Health First Aid to more than 1700 people. Matthew focused on aspects of mental health and self-care and inspired the educators to reflect on their own lived experience and think about strategies to ensure their own health and well-being.

We also welcomed Drew Dudley, who is an internationally acclaimed leadership speaker, Wall Street Journal author and the creator of the renowned TED talk "Everyday Leadership: The Lollipop Moment." Drew spoke about the role all educators play as a leader (even without a formal position/title) and a team player, and the impact positive leadership and teamwork has on our ability to deliver on our mission in the community.

We were so impressed with the energy and positivity from those who attended and received wonderful feedback overall!





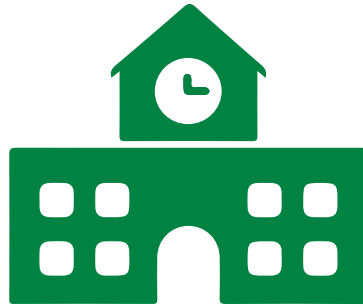
Strategic Priority: Program Excellence, Growth & Expansion

We will continue to maintain our areas of excellence, while expanding opportunities for children, youth, and families to actively and meaningfully engage in their communities.

SPC Childcare Centres

1,986

children



11%

growth

Licensed Home Childcare

162

children in LHCC



148%

growth

Claremont Outdoor Camp

511

camper weeks



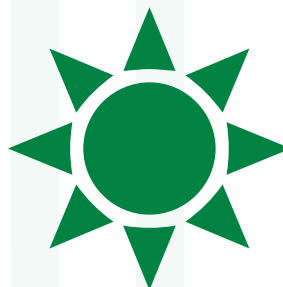
290%

growth

Licensed Summer Camp (K/SA)

3,688

camper weeks



15.5%

growth

Promoting Learning and Development through Play!

We believe in the power of play – and we know that children learn best with supportive and responsive educators who provide ample opportunity for rich play experiences. To support our educators and enhance the learning experiences for children we welcomed a team of Pedagogical Leaders.

Our Pedagogical Leaders are Registered Early Childhood Educators who work collaboratively with their colleagues within the classroom environment, to support thoughtful and intentional pedagogical practice.

This work helps to ensure an experience for young children that focuses on:

- Building and nurturing relationships
- Creating a physical environment that inspires learning
- Planning experiences based on the observed and expressed interests of the children
- Reflecting and documenting the learning experience

Some early successes of this work include:

- “Re-imagining” the educator resource rooms where educators can borrow loose parts, resource kits and books to enhance their programs and extend on the children’s learning
- Adding 17 new kits to the space including sewing machines, pottery wheels, microscopes, STEM materials a Cricut and more!
- Stocking our consumable material room, where educators can take materials to use within their programs – often for creative and building/construction experiences
- Creating an online forum where educators can see what is available
- Conducting in-centre visits to enhance the learning environments
- Developing and facilitating a 3-part pedagogical training to support educators who work with children 0-5 years







Strategic Priority: Community Development

We will leverage our charitable position to remove barriers and improve access to programs and services that meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.



1,025

families engaging on Storypark



753

Facebook followers



122

members of the SPC Resources
Facebook community



101

Instagram followers

Discovering the Great Outdoors!

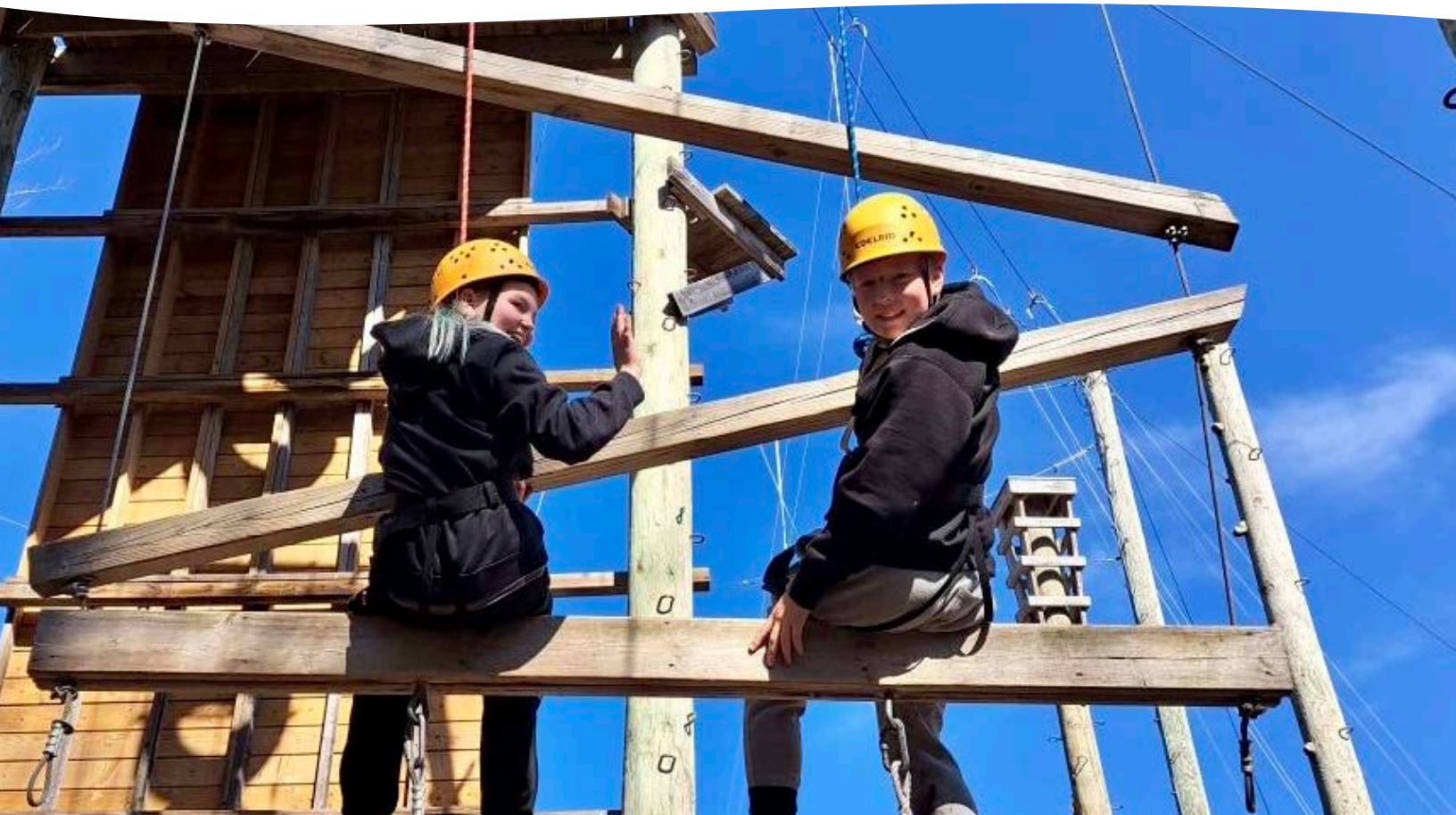
This March Break we offered an overnight camp experience for 9–12-year-olds in partnership with YMCA Camp Pinecrest. The group, who were all away from home for the first time EVER stayed for 3 nights and 4 days, slept in winterized cabins, and dined as a family/community.

Some experiences included:

- Creating nature books
- Forest exploration, maple sugaring and making cedar tea
- Campfires and learning about stars/constellations
- Broomball and gagaball
- Team building activities, low ropes, and high ropes
- Archery
- Fun evening activities including Don't Drop the Beat, Tommy the Humpty Dumpty Egg Drop and Giant Pictionary.

By all accounts, the experience was incredible for these children...they arrived as individuals and left as a team. When they returned from camp, they were very tired and very dirty – and already making plans to return next year!

Through our partnership with YMCA Camp Pinecrest, we were able to ensure that any child who wanted to attend could have the opportunity without the barrier of cost. For some, this is an experience that they would not typically have, and the memories will last a lifetime.





Family Engagement

“Families are composed of individuals who are competent and capable, curious, and rich in experience. Families leave their children and want the best for them. Families are experts on their children. They are the first and most powerful influence on children’s learning, development, health, and well-being. Families bring diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Families should feel they belong, are valuable contributors to their children’s learning, and deserve to be engaged in a meaningful way.”

-How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

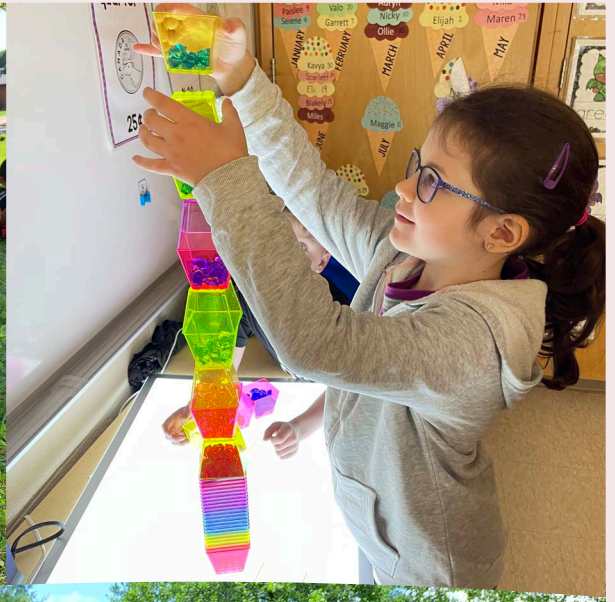
Our family engagement committee continues to distribute bi-monthly newsletters for families. Some topics include:

- An Introduction to DROC (Durham Region Operating Criteria)
- Early Literacy
- The Role of the ELI (Early Learning Inclusion consultants)
- The Value of Outdoor Play and SPC Camp Programs.

In addition to the bi-monthly newsletters, we are very proud of our centre teams and their authentic day to day engagement with families.

Some of the ways families have been engaged include:

- Impromptu dodgeball and basketball games/tournaments
- Holiday celebrations
- Open houses
- Art shows
- Talent shows
- And more!





Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham

Cultivating the Leaders of Tomorrow





"Our children love their educators and often talk about them at home. They're always excited to go to childcare, which is a reflection of how much they enjoy being there. Keep up the great work!"

— Parent

