

A photograph showing a woman with blonde hair leaning over a baby. The baby is looking up at a fountain with water spraying. The woman is wearing a pink top and the baby is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a brick wall.

2014

An Introduction to
How Does Learning Happen?
Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years

For Home Child Care Providers

As a home child care provider, you might be asking yourself . . .

- How can I make a difference for children? For families?
- What does the latest research about children’s learning and development tell us?
- How can I continue to grow and feel inspired about my work?
- What resources are available to support me in my work?

How Does Learning Happen? guides you through these and other important questions.

How Does Learning Happen? is an exciting professional learning resource for those who work with children and families across all early years settings, including child care centres, family support programs, and home child care. It promotes a shared understanding of what’s most important for children and



and their families. It is **not** a checklist of tasks to complete or a template for a “one-size-fits-all” approach, and it is **not** a rating scale for measuring quality. Rather, *How Does Learning Happen?* describes effective practices and emphasizes positive relationships as critical for quality early years programs.

As a home child care provider, you are part of the broader early years system. Families choose a program like yours because of the unique opportunities home environments provide for children to grow and develop. Your home provides a place for children to interact and learn with others of varied ages in a smaller family setting, connect with the community, and build a strong relationship with you that can last for many years.

How Does Learning Happen? describes ways in which you can strengthen the relationships you have and the experiences you provide in your program. Keeping these ideas in mind can help ensure that all children in your program have a sense of belonging and well-being, and are engaged and able to express themselves in many ways.

This brief guide introduces you to the ideas in *How Does Learning Happen?*

What does *How Does Learning Happen?* mean for program quality?

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In *How Does Learning Happen?*, **quality** refers to the kinds of early years programs where, in addition to meeting children’s basic health and safety needs, home child care providers:

- build positive, caring, and responsive relationships with each child;
- create a home environment that allows for flexibility based on each child’s unique characteristics, abilities, and interests;
- focus on children’s social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive development in a holistic way;
- support learning through exploration, play, and inquiry;
- connect with organizations in the community (e.g., licensed home child care agencies and family support programs);
- foster communication and collaboration with families, and value their strengths, contributions, and unique perspectives; and
- engage in ongoing learning and self-reflection.

These approaches to quality are consistent with those generally accepted as contributing to quality across other settings (e.g., home child care, family support programs, kindergarten, elementary school, and beyond). Consistent experiences across these settings mean smoother transitions and better experiences and outcomes for children.

What will I find in *How Does Learning Happen?*

1. An Understanding of Children, Families, and Educators*

The way we view others influences how we interact with them. *How Does Learning Happen?* promotes a shared view of children, families, and educators – and the relationships between them – that will help shape all aspects of your home child care program. Specifically:

- When you see **children** as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential, you value and build on their strengths and abilities.
- When you see **families** as experts who know their children better than anyone else and have important information to share, you value and engage them in a meaningful way.
- When you see **yourself** as a competent caregiver and educator, and as someone rich in experience, you are responsive and nurturing. This view of yourself, along with what you learn through relationships with children, families, and others in the community, allows you to create engaging experiences and environments.

* In this guide and in *How Does Learning Happen?*, the term “educator” refers to all those who work with children and families in early years programs, including home child care providers.

Adopting these perspectives in your practice can help you work towards the goals for children and expectations for programs set out in *How Does Learning Happen?*

2. Foundations, Goals, and Expectations

How Does Learning Happen? sets out goals for children and expectations for programs, organized around four foundations that are central to children’s learning and growth. The goals for children provide a basis for thinking about and creating the kinds of environments and experiences that are meaningful for children. They are not meant to measure children’s development but rather to guide what you do on a daily basis. The expectations for programs provide ideas and examples of what you can do to create environments, experiences, and interactions that support the goals for children in your home child care program. Detailed descriptions and examples can be found in the “**Foundations for Learning**” section of the document.



Foundations	Goals for Children	Expectations for Programs
Belonging	Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world.	Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them.
Well-Being	Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being.	Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self.
Engagement	Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses.	Early childhood programs provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry.
Expression	Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways.	Early childhood programs foster communication and expression in all forms.

3. Questions for Reflection

How Does Learning Happen? includes questions to help you reflect on what you do every day. You can use these questions in conversations with families and others you have contact with in the community (e.g., at Ontario Early Years Centres and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres) as a starting point for thinking about and acting on the goals for children. Those of you who work with a licensed home child care agency also have the opportunity to talk to agency staff, who may be reflecting on the same questions and ideas as you are.

What does this mean for me?

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As a home child care provider, you play an important role in the lives of children and families. What you do has a big impact, now and in the future. The meaningful connections you make with children and their families help you to create experiences in which everyone can grow together.

How Does Learning Happen? doesn't mean doing more but looking at what you are already doing with a different focus. This different focus helps you be aware of what you're doing and why it matters. For example, as a home child care provider, you have a unique opportunity to support how learning happens by:

- being flexible in your daily routines and building on children's natural curiosity about the world around them;
- thinking about your home environment and neighbourhood as rich in possibilities for children to learn through exploration, play, and inquiry;
- enabling children of varied ages to develop strong relationships, learn together, and care about one another;

- connecting with your community by participating in its programs and accessing its resources (e.g., visiting and using local libraries, recreation centres, parks, and family support programs);
- having conversations with licensed home child care agency staff as co-learners in which you ask one another questions and together reflect on the goals for children and expectations for programs;
- building relationships in which children and families feel secure, and using your experiences with the children to help your program evolve as they grow and mature;
- engaging in self-reflection, and participating in professional learning coordinated by licensed home child care agencies, your municipality, or other early years programs in your community.

You are not alone on this journey. Other programs in your community (e.g., Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres) and licensed home child care agencies can support you as you continue to strengthen your program.

How will stronger connections with families benefit the children in my program?

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How Does Learning Happen? encourages strong, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with families. When you invite children and families into your home, you have an opportunity to build strong and trusting relationships. A quality home child care program relies on ongoing conversations with families about what they know about their children and what they want for them. These conversations help you to make stronger connections with families and better understand the children's home life and their

daily experience in your program. This helps you support the children’s learning and development.

Families can also benefit from your knowledge and experience. You can support your conversations with families by sharing information with them from the Ministry of Education website, including *How Does Learning Happen?*, videos, research, and much more. The ministry’s website can be accessed at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/index.html.

What about ELECT?

Throughout Ontario, the principles of ELECT (*Early Learning for Every Child Today*) and an understanding of child development have been embedded into many early years programs. *How Does Learning Happen?* builds on the important work that has been done so far.

Key sections from “ELECT” are in *Excerpts from “ELECT”*, which can be accessed at www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/excerpts.html.

How can I get started?

There are many ways to use *How Does Learning Happen?* and build on what you already know. To get started, you can ask yourself – and talk with others about – some of the following questions:

- How does my view of children compare with how children are described in the document?

(Turn to the section entitled “**An Understanding of Children, Families, and Educators**” for how the document describes children.)

- What can I do to build trusting relationships with families?
(Turn to the section entitled “**The Family**” for further information about engaging with families to support children in their learning.)
- As an educator in a home child care program, how can I learn more about my role?
(Turn to the section entitled “**The Educator**” to learn more about the crucial role of the educator in collaborating with children and families to support quality programs.)
- How can I put more focus on the foundations of belonging, engagement, expression, and well-being in my daily practice?
(Turn to the section entitled “**Foundations for Learning**” for further information on how you can put theory into practice.)
- If I could do one thing today to start using *How Does Learning Happen?* in my home child care program, what would it be? Why?

Where can I learn more?

Professional resources such as the following are available to support continuous learning and reflection in your practice:

How Does Learning Happen?

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf

Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/research.html

Includes research briefs and videos on topics such as pedagogical leadership, environment, self-regulation, brain development, pedagogical documentation, inclusion, and parent engagement.

Excerpts from “ELECT”

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/excerpts.html

Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) (full document)

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/continuum/continuum.pdf

Early Learning Framework website

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/

Includes videos, photos, and highlights of the principles of ELECT.

The following will help you locate programs in your area:

Ontario Early Years Centres website

www.oeyc.edu.gov.on.ca/

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres website

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/pflc.html

Licensed Child Care Finder website

www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/LCCWWeb/childcare/search.xhtml

Select “Private-Home Child Care Agency” to find the licensed home child care agencies in your area.

For other relevant information and resources, contact your municipal government and/or visit the Ministry of Education website at:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/index.html.



As part of the broader early years system, what you do every day has a lasting impact on children's learning, development, health, and well-being as they grow and mature in your program.

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