BUILDING BLOCKS
CO-OPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL
- SINCE 1976 -

PROGRAM STATEMENT

We view all **children** as special. Although they are unique in genetic makeup, rate of development and cultural background, they are all naturally curious, capable of learning, eager to master new skills and rich in potential. The first few years of a child's life set the stage for future development. This places considerable responsibility on those working with preschool children to meet the needs of each individual child and to assist him/her in developing his/her fullest potential.

The program at Building Blocks emphasizes **"learning through play**". For the young child, play is not a frivolous pastime—it is an absolute essential to total physical, cognitive, language, emotional and social development. Play capitalizes on the child's natural curiosity and exuberance.

These learning experiences happen throughout the child's daily routine which encompasses a balance of indoor and outdoor play activities, chosen by the individual child, as well as Circle Time and snack.This daily routine will prepare the child for formal schooling as well as give the child a sense of security and well-being.

During most mornings, the children move about the playrooms and choose from a number of activity centres: creative (including painting and play dough), books and puzzles, water play, sand play, the housekeeping centre, large blocks, carpentry area and shelf toys. This philosophy of self-selection promotes self-motivation and independence, as well as a positive attitude towards learning.

The freedom to be creative helps develop the child's individuality and helps the a child think for him/herself. The finished product may reveal very little of the richness of the experience the child has gained in the process. Usually the young child's work is an expression of his/her feelings, perceptions experiences and experimentation. The parent/teacher role, rather than directing, is to be observant and responsive to the child's needs , and above all, to be sincerely interested in him/her and his/her activities.

Play also teaches interaction with others and provides opportunities to develop friendships with other children. It helps them learn how to get along with others and to handle conflict situations. With firm but gentle guidance, play teaches how to self-regulate their own emotions and behaviours.

Building Blocks is a centre of inclusion. We believe that every child deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and equality. We honour and respect all children's beliefs, culture, language and experiences acquired from their family and community. Any child with special needs will also be given the opportunity to excel and flourish -- our environment can be structured to accommodate his/her needs.

Parents know their own children best. They have valuable information to provide to the nursery school. They are also the most powerful influence in their child's life. They want to understand how to support their child's development and will benefit from open communication and engagement with knowledgeable educators, rich in experience.

Service coordination meetings with resource professionals in the community may be set up if needed to discuss the best interests of the child and family.

Goals of the Program & Approaches: (guided by "How Does Learning Happen?")

1.To promote the health, safety, nutrition and physical **well-being** of each child (a).

- Parents are asked to keep sick children at home
- Handwashing is essential—as per handwashing policy
- Gloves are used when in contact with bodily fluids
- Snacks are nutritious, containing two food groups from Canada's Food Guide
- Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit guidelines are followed and policies for Children at Risk (Allergies) are followed.
- There are three adults at the school at all times.
- There is always one adult in a room where there is at least one child. Adult supervision is required at the carpentry centre. Outdoors, adults stand in positions where all areas of play may be observed.
- Toys and equipment are inspected regularly. Any damaged toys or furniture are immediately put out of use.
- If toys are put into a child's mouth, they are disinfected immediately. No utensils are shared.
- Children are not to run up and down stairs. All children wear shoes/slippers.
- Students and volunteers are not permitted to have direct unsupervised access to children.

2. To develop positive interactions which give each child a sense of **belonging** and emotional **well-being** (b,c,f,i).

- Each child is welcomed into the program upon arrival.
- Every child has his own name tag and cubby for his belongings (with his picture).
- Adults get down to the child's level during play and are attentive and responsive to what the child is saying and doing
- Every child is recognized for his/her effort as well as his/her accomplishments.
- Every child's strengths and abilities are valued. Displays of his/her activities and accomplishments are created. Messages are added to art to indicate what the child was thinking about.
- Positive approaches are used when guiding behaviour.
- Routine is maintained which gives the children a sense of security and well-being
- Children are encouraged to interact with other children and adults at the centre and to participate in Circle and other group events.
- Children are encouraged to share with one another (toys, experiences, etc.)
- Toys, pictures etc. which reflect children of different cultures, challenges and backgrounds are used. Everyone is treated equally with respect.
- Self-care is encouraged as much as possible (dressing self, putting away toys, assisting with serving food)

- Connections are cultivated with our community through field visits, guests, bringing in artifacts from the community, fundraising and through participation in community events (such as Autumnfest). Children may be involved in “good cause” ventures (e.g. Food Bank).
- Photos of children will be displayed on the wall.

3. To help each child become an active and **engaged** learner through planned meaningful play (d,e,g).

- Children are observed to assess interests and strengths and program is planned based on these observations.
- Learning experiences and circle times engage individual children in exploration and inquiry, and play activities (including sensory activities and a Science and Nature program) are planned. Science experiments have been added.
- Parents are asked to collect “beautiful junk” for a variety of play and craft materials. A shelf with lots of collage materials is available to children to choose their own materials.
- A variety of toys and materials are already available for exploration, fine motor manipulation and creative play (sand, water table, paint easels, craft table, train track, blocks, carpentry area, etc). Different types of painting (e.g. finger, marble, string art) are tried.
- Musical instruments are sometimes put out.
- Children are encouraged to choose play activities and regulate their own play from a variety of different centres. Centres are rotated when children lose interest.
- Experiences which develop reasoning, problem-solving and memory are offered in order to prepare for formal schooling
- Outdoor equipment encourages large muscle coordination (trucks, scooters, tricycles, etc.). Some outdoor activities are planned.
- Challenges are offered within the child’s capability to master them.
- Children are encouraged to solve their own problems and come up with solutions.
- Children are encouraged to be creative, and not just follow an adult’s model.

4. To enable children to **express** themselves in many different ways (b,c).

- The feelings of the child must be accepted even if these are negative.
- Children are encouraged to use vocabulary to communicate thoughts to others in a positive way.
- At times, two smaller circles are used (perhaps according to needs of individual children) for language development rather than one large circle when children may all talk at once.
- Staff model appropriate social skills and use language to extend the vocabulary of children.
- Kindness and caring behaviours are acknowledged.
- Children are encouraged to contribute ideas and ask questions.
- Children learn new songs and hear stories at Circle time.
- Children are asked to tell stories based on pictures.

- Pretend centres are set up for dramatic play (dress-ups, house centre, pretend bus). A full-length mirror could be added o children can see their expressions, appearance etc.)
- Craft and paint areas allow self-expression
- Signs throughout the centre encourage literacy skills

5. To foster ongoing communication with and among parents (h,k).

- Parents are encouraged to participate as parent volunteers and assist qualified teachers within the programme.
- Teachers and parents discuss the “whys” of troublesome behavior and problem-solving solutions.
- Informal discussion between the teacher and the parent at drop-off and pickup times inform the nursery school about the child’s strengths, interests and talents.
- Parents will also be encouraged to send photos and/or comments about the activities and interests of their child via texting to the school.
- Program plans and snacks provided are posted for parents on the bulletin board.
- Parents and teachers are asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the year of how the program impacted their children and their families.
- Parents communicate with each other using social media (e-mail and a private Facebook group site) and bulletin board postings.

6. To provide continuous professional learning for teachers and volunteers who work with the children (l,j).

- Seminars are budgeted for all staff (as financially feasible) and time off will be provided to attend.
- Teachers are encouraged to talk to other nursery school teachers to share practices through Simcoe County Childcare Services professional development .
- Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own strengths and needs and to make a professional development plan for themselves.
- All staff and Board members are encouraged to use Ministry online resources, especially those dealing with *How Does Learning Happen*?, *Think*, *Feel, Act*, and *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT).*
- Community resources are used such as Simcoe County Early Intervention Services and Child Care Manual, as well as resource teachers.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location:	Midhurst United Church, Doran Road, Midhurst, ON, L9X 0L5
Phone:	705-722-1078 (Mornings only)
School year:	September (after Labour Day) to the end of June Christmas and March breaks are the same as the public school system. Nursery school will be held on public school P.D. days.
Hours of operation:	9:00 am to 12:00 noon (Monday to Thursday) Children may be picked up after 11:45 but no later than 12:00. Please remember to sign your child in and out. If someone other than a parent (or car pool) is picking up your child, please let the teachers know.

TO ENROLL:

Your child must be 30 months of age by the beginning of September. Up to 20% of the children (i.e. 3) may be between 24 and 30 months to be eligible. The licensed capacity for the school is 16 children.

PAYMENT OF FEES

TUITION FEES:

Building Blocks has become part of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement signed by the federal and provincial governments. That means the average parent fee will be reduced to $10 a day by 2026. Parents will be informed of the fee for each year at the time of registration.

Monthly fees are to be paid to the Treasurer by a series of post-dated cheques by the first day of school or by e-transfer at the beginning of each month. If e-transfer Is used, first and last month tuition fees are required at the beginning of the school year and a $1.25 service fee should be added to each e-transfer.

NSF cheques will have a $25 penalty plus bank charges applied against them.

WAIT LIST:

As spots become available within the nursery school, families will be contacted first:

a) those who have siblings currently at Building Blocks AND

b) those who want to enroll their child in the available spot immediately (ie: not three months from now), AND

c) those whose names are on top of the list (i.e. have been waiting for the longest) AND

d) those whose child meets age eligibility requirements

If requested, the wait list will be accessible to parents waiting. However only the first names and last initial of the child will be used to protect privacy.

CHOICE OF PROGRAM:

You may choose a two-day program (Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday), or a four-day program for your child, depending on availability.

CLOTHING:

Please dress your child in washable, comfortable play clothes. All clothing should be labeled. Choose slippers or shoes which are rubber-soled. It is a good idea to send a backup set of clothes in case of an accident or spill. Since outdoor play is a daily activity (weather permitting), please make sure your child has suitable warm outdoor clothing.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

Building Blocks will be open on snow days as long as the public schools are open, even if the buses are not running. The school will be closed if the weather is so bad that staff are not able to make it into work. In this case, the Chair will notify parents by e-mail. Otherwise, it will be up to you to decide if you wish to keep your child home in bad weather.

WITHDRAWAL:

If it becomes necessary to withdraw your child from the school, notify the Registrar in writing **one month** in advance. Unused cheques will be returned.

When a child cannot cope in the program, the Supervisor will discuss this with the family. If the situation cannot be resolved, it will be brought to the attention of the Board of Directors. If the collaborative efforts of the directors, teachers, family and other services (if appropriate) fail and the suggested steps to alleviate the problem are not successful, the child may not be able to continue in the program. In this case, unused cheques will be returned to the family.

Orientation of the Child to the School

Starting at nursery school is an exciting experience for young children, but it can also be a difficult one. Some children adjust quickly and easily to the program. Others need time, and the help and understanding of sympathetic parents and teachers before feeling comfortable in the group setting. One of the functions of the nursery school is to provide a supportive environment for the child during the adjustment process.

When you bring your child to the school, plan to stay until she/he feels secure enough to cope without your presence. Remain on the sidelines and allow your child to move out from you when she/he feels ready to do so. Some children need time to observe and assess the situation with a parent nearby before feeling ready to join the group activity. The teacher will encourage the child to participate, but the child will not be forced to do so. The time that a parent needs to remain at the school will vary greatly with the age and needs of each child. This can be worked out between the teacher and the parent.

Responsibility of Care

The care of each child becomes the responsibility of the teacher once the individual child's parent/designated driver has notified the teachers of the child's presence and has left the supervised area.

The parent/designated driver assumes joint responsibility for the care and control of their child at any time they are in a supervised area and assumes responsibility for any other children with them who are not enrolled in Building Blocks. The parent should inform the teacher when they are removing their child from the premises.

No child will be released to an unknown person.

SUPERVISION OF CHILD:

Building Blocks will ensure that a staff member is in each playroom during the children's play and shall:

- ensure that each child is supervised at all times and never left alone or unattended.
- if one staff member needs to rotate or leave the playroom, they shall ensure that another staff is informed and available to change playrooms.

When outdoors, the children are supervised at all times. Children will be taken to the washroom before dressing for outdoor play to minimize the chances of a child needing the toilet once outdoors. If a child does need to use the washroom, a staff member/duty parent can accompany the child without changing the 1:8 staff:children ratio.

FIELD TRIPS:

You will be notified in advance of each field trip, and you (or a designated adult) must accompany your child. Younger siblings are welcome. If additional fees are required, usually the enrolled child's fee will be covered; however, the parent will pay for their own

and other family members' admission. Remember a car seat is necessary for each child. Please ensure they are buckled in.

Co-operative Responsibilities

There are many ways parents can contribute to the successful management of the school.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Four to five parents are needed each year to serve on the Board of Directors. Each director has specific responsibilities (e.g. Chair, secretary, treasurer, registration, volunteer management, etc). Board meetings are usually held on a monthly basis.

PARTICIPATING PARENTS:

Since the legislated ratio of teachers to children is 1:8 at all times, we require at least two teachers. We currently have three teachers to cover unforeseen circumstances and teacher absences. However, parents are encouraged to participate in the classroom, are considered to be volunteers and are not counted in the ratio. All volunteers must have an up-to-date criminal reference check and up-to-date immunizations. A Volunteer Handbook will outline the policies and practices that are relevant. The volunteers interact with the children, assist with serving snack, help the children dress for outdoor play and help with clean-up. They are a key component of our co-operative nursery school program.

The legislation does allow for two "duty parents" to take the place of one teacher. Since we sometimes need a replacement if teachers are ill, we will designate several volunteer parents as "duty" parents who might be called on if needed. These duty parents will also be required to have a valid first aid certificate including child CPR.

NON-PARTICIPATING PARENTS:

Even if you are not directly involved in the classroom, you are expected to help with fundraising, seasonal yard clean-up, Costco runs, laundering and with other committee duties. All parents should attend and participate in the annual general meeting.

PARENT RESOURCE:

Parents are encouraged to contribute their talents to the program —
e.g. story-telling, puppetry, baking, playing a musical instrument, etc. Please discuss your ideas with the teacher so that a suitable time and format can be worked out.

BEAUTIFUL JUNK:

Junk at home is not beautiful, but in the hands of children, it becomes useful and "beautiful" for all kinds of creative activities and experimental play. Please see the following list for useful items to save.

ACTIVITY	MATERIALS
Collage	Sequins, confetti, seeds, flowers, macaroni, egg shells, buttons, egg boxes, beads, beans
Cloth	Velvet, prints, netting, lace, plastic, silk, satin, wool, ribbons, cotton
Fancy papers	Tissue, crepe, shiny gift wrapping, metallic, fuzzy, chocolate papers, cupcake papers, corrugated tin foil, newspapers, cellophane
Gluing and Carpentry	Wood scraps, dowels, spools, floor tiles, wood shavings, sawdust, chair rungs, corks, paper plates, cups, Styrofoam, tooth and paint brushes, small cardboard boxes, wooden boxes, cardboard, eye droppers, small boxes, pine cones, plastic boxes, calendar rolls, toilet paper rolls, tin cans, ice cream spoons, golf tees, toothpicks, scrap jewelry, popsicle sticks, bread tabs, old nylons
Sandbox and Water Play	Tin cans, plastic cups, plastic bottles, detergent bottles, ice ream containers, toy cars, straws, pots, pans, sieves, funnels, large spoons, egg beaters, cookie cutters, pie plates, bottle tops, margarine containers, wooden spoons, basters
Nature Corner	Pine cones, acorns, chestnuts, seeds, shells, cocoons, fungus, moss, bird nests, berries, leaves, animal pictures, magnets, stones, bulbs for planting, potting soil and pots
Music	Any type of bell, rattle or drum; anything that makes sounds; any musical instrument that might be brought for the day; any person that plays an instrument and might come for the day; song books, silk scarves or filmy material for dancing

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SANITARY PRACTICES:

Staff will engage in sanitary practices, including hand washing to prevent the spread of germs. Children will also be instructed on good hand washing procedures.

Children will wash their hands :

- when coming in from outdoors/on arrival
- after using the toilet/potty
- before and after eating
- before and after water and sand play
- after contact with pets or animals
- when hands are visibly dirty for any reason

When outdoors and a sink is not available for handwashing, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used. Parents will be asked to consent to the use of this product.

Toys and activity tables will be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. Soiled cloth diapers will be double-bagged and sent home with the child.Food will be handled with care and attention to preventing the spread of germs.

STUDENT ABSENCE AND SAFETY NOTIFICATION POLICY

For the safety of our students, parents or guardians are required to notify the school if their child will be absent for a day or multiple days. This notification must be sent via email, either the evening before the absence or no later than 9:00 AM on the morning of the absence. This ensures timely communication with the child's teachers and helps maintain a safe and accountable school environment.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

Children must be up-to-date with immunizations recommended by the Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit. A copy of the child's immunization record must be provided at registration.

If parents have chosen to not have their child immunized because of medical reasons, they must have their doctor or nurse practitioner complete a Ministry-approved form indicating these medical reasons.
If parents object to immunization based on religious or conscientious reasons, they must complete a Ministry-approved form and have it notarized.

All staff members, volunteers or students must also be fully immunized.

ILLNESS OF CHILD:

If there is any question of illness, do not send your child to school.

Signs of illness include:

- a fever of 38 C. or greater
- vomiting or diarrhea
- undiagnosed rash or skin infection
- ear or eye discharge
- sore throat, frequent sneezing and coughing

It is up to the parents to notify the teacher of the reason for your child's absence. If a communicable disease is contracted, please be sure to notify the teacher so this can be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as soon as possible.

The child should remain at home until symptoms have improved for 24 hours without the use of fever-suppressant medication.

If a child becomes ill at school, you will be notified to come and pick up your child as soon as possible. The child may be isolated from the other children, but an adult will remain with your child until you arrive. If you cannot be contacted and medical attention is needed, the child may be taken to a walk-in clinic or Emergency with your signed permission.

OUTBREAK OF ILLNESS:

Usually, two or more children with similar symptoms of illness are required in order for an outbreak to be declared. In that case, Building Blocks will follow the directions of the Medical Officer of Health, and parents will be notified. No new children will be registered during an outbreak of illness. Some activities such as sand and water play, as well as field trips and social activities will be suspended.

SNACKS:

For the safety and well-being of all children, we have a *No Outside Food or Snacks* policy. All snacks and meals will be provided by the daycare to ensure that dietary restrictions, allergies, and nutritional guidelines are followed. This includes birthday celebratory snacks. We have our own tradition of singing, and parents are welcome to bring stickers instead of outside food. Please refrain from sending any outside food or drinks with your child unless specifically approved by staff for medical reasons.

As much as possible, nutritious snacks that are prepackaged and nutritious will be purchased and served to the children. Water, rather than juices, will be served.

Foods high in sugar or salt, and foods that are small, round and hard, have red food colouring or stick to the teeth are avoided. At no time will nuts or nut-based products be served.

Snacks given to the children each day are recorded on a snack calendar on the bulletin board by the entrance.

If children are sensitive or allergic to certain foods or have special dietary concerns (e.g. diabetes), please let the teachers know. A list of their names will be posted on the bulletin boards in the snack room and in the activity room.

ANAPHYLACTIC REACTIONS:

There may be children at Building Blocks who have severe allergies which can cause an anaphylactic reaction, so severe it can cause death. Nuts and peanuts are common triggers for anaphylaxis. As a result, Building Blocks does not permit nuts, peanuts or nut/peanut products to be brought into the centre.

If your child is entering the school after recently eating peanut butter or other nut products, please ensure that hands are thoroughly washed and teeth are brushed. These allergies can be so sensitive that even touching or inhaling a trace amount can trigger a life-threatening reaction.

Parents will be asked to sign a form confirming they understand our policy regarding allergies and will abide by it.

Parents with children with anaphylaxis will provide an individual plan for their child prior to enrolment and provide an Epi-pen if needed.

All parents will be informed by letter/handout of all allergies in the centre. As well, a list of allergies will be posted in each room operated by the nursery school, including the information board by the snack table.

MEDICATIONS:

Building Blocks will NOT administer any prescribed medications to a child, except emergency medications such as an epi-pen or inhaler.

PREVENTION & HANDLING OF ACCIDENTS:

Children are encouraged to use the handrail on the stairs. Running up or down the stairs is forbidden. Children should wear shoes or slippers inside the centre. They are discouraged from running and shouting in the playrooms. When the carpentry equipment is in use, an adult must be supervising.

Please ensure that the gate to the playground is closed after entering or leaving the area. Staff position themselves in the playground to have supervision of all the children.

There is a “No Smoking” policy inside and outside the premises of Building Blocks, whether or not children are present. Anyone smoking will be asked to leave.

All staff are required to have a standard First Aid Certificate, including infant and child CPR. An up-to-date, stocked first aid kit is available for use if needed.

Parents will be notified if their child has an accident of any kind.

SERIOUS OCCURRENCES:

We work diligently to provide a safe, creative and nurturing environment for each child. In spite of all the best precautions, serious occurrences can sometimes take place.

The Ontario Government has introduced a policy that requires licensed child care centres to post information about serious occurrences that happen at the centre, in order to support increased transparency and access to information for parents within the program and for prospective parents.

A serious occurrence could include:

- serious injury to a child
- a missing child
- abuse of a child while at the centre
- a disaster such as a fire, flood, gas leak or long-term power outage
- a complaint about the service provided being non-standard

This posting will give parents information about the incident and outline follow-up action taken and the outcomes, while respecting the privacy of the individuals involved. Longer term actions taken will also be included to help prevent similar incidents in the future.

Many factors may lead to a serious occurrence report. A serious occurrence does not necessarily mean that the school is not complying with licensing requirements or that children are at risk in the program.

We encourage you to speak to us for more information about serious occurrences and the Serious Occurrence Notification posting policy.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Building Blocks has emergency management policies and procedures for a variety of emergencies which are outlined in full in the policy manual at the school. Once the immediate emergency has passed, parents will be notified by phone or email and asked to come to pick up their child at the school or the evacuation site.

PET POLICY

We understand that pets are an important part of your family, but they are not permitted on the premises of Building Blocks. For drop-off and pick-up, parents and guardians must keep all animals on a leash and outside the gated area. This policy is in place to ensure the health and safety of our students, particularly those with allergies, and to avoid any unintended interactions between pets and children.

PARENTS' ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

Parents' issues and concerns regarding management of the school or conduct of the staff or volunteers that puts a child's health, safety and well-being at risk will always be taken seriously and will be addressed promptly and with respect.

Parents are encouraged to regularly discuss what their children are experiencing and the progress of their child with the teacher at any time.Parent-teacher interviews can be arranged if requested.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated by any party. If at any point, a parent or staff member feels uncomfortable or threatened, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the Board. All issues and concerns will be brought forward to the Board who will attempt to come to a resolution. This will be communicated to the parent within three business days, or as soon as reasonably possible. Every effort will be made to respect the privacy of parents, children, staff and volunteers. If parents are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may respond to the Board in writing.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PLANS:

An individualized support plan may be designed for any child with special physical or medical needs to allow him/her to more fully participate In the program. A team consisting of the parent, the Supervisor and a health professional (if needed) will meet together to draft the plan. This plan appropriate to the age and development of the child may include:

- steps to reduce the risk of being exposed to any agent or situation that will exacerbate the situation
- a description of any supports, aids or medical devices that are needed to adapt to the nursery school environment (e.g. mobile devices, hearing aids)
- instructions related to the use of these aids
- a description of the procedures to be followed in a medical emergency
- ways the environment might be adapted to assist the functioning of the child (e.g. specific furniture or layout of the room)
- other ways the nursery school can support the child to participate in a meaningful way (including field trips and need for evacuation)
- the names of the persons who participated in the plan

The Supervisor will communicate with the parent frequently to discuss the progress of the plan and any changes necessary.