

Quiet Times



Issue 1, 2016

a newsletter for Home-Based Caregivers

Celebrating Children as Our Future

Big or small, authentic or toy, children and their families were exploring at “Trucks to Touch”, an event designed to celebrate childhood, and children as our future. In “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years”, we can understand how cultivating connections to the world around us helps to create a sense of belonging. This is a free family event, where local businesses and community members bring their vehicles and equipment. Here children get a chance to meet the owners/operators and to climb aboard. They can check out first-hand how the horn on a transport truck works, or how sitting in the front seat of a police car feels. This supports and engages children in active and meaningful exploration, play, and inquiry.

“Programs are most effective if the primary focus stays on supporting the child within his or her family and community. Child, family and community well-being must be equally valued, since they are inextricably linked.” (FRP Canada, 2011, p.15) As care providers and educators we can support children’s learning by providing opportunities to engage in our communities, build connections and to learn and discover from the wonderful people, equipment, and places that are right at our fingertips.

HN REACH, Ontario Early Years Centre Haldimand & Norfolk has participated in “Trucks to Touch” for the past five years, celebrating each child and adults’ expression of joy and wonder as they explore the items that we pass when driving or see working hard on-site. We watched as connections were made between the children and the people who operate these vehicles. There may not always be a “Trucks to Touch” event to participate in, but there are shops, construction sites, government buildings, and so many other resources we can help connect our children with to build relationships and belonging within our communities.



Celebrating Children and Youth in Haldimand & Norfolk

The Week of the Child & Youth Haldimand and Norfolk is committed to raising awareness of children and youth as our future, celebrating childhood, and acknowledging the contributions of our community and its members as we raise our children. The Week of the Child & Youth motto is “take time for kids”!

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years.* Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2014..

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Building Rewarding Positive Interactions with Children

Submitted by: *HN REACH*



Spending our days with young children can be both rewarding and challenging. There are many things which affect our day, some in our control and some outside of it. As educators and caregivers, the time and effort that we spend in building positive interactions with the children in our care has a huge impact on the overall well being of the children, the staff, and our programs.

Much time has been spent studying the environment and its effects on children and their learning. Many different curriculums and philosophies have been written, implemented, and evaluated. They all have a part to play in this wonderful field of working with children, but the most influence lies within the daily, moment to moment interactions that take place between the adult and the children. The positive relationships between the caregiver and the child act like a catalyst to the environment and the curriculum. Positive relationships directly impact the emotional well-being of the child, which opens up their capacity to learn. The document “How Does Learning Happen?, Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years” is based on four foundations; Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression. These four foundations all are connected to a child’s emotional well-being, which are directly related to the positive rewarding interactions that the child has with the adults in their life. Recognizing the importance of these interactions is crucial if we are to make the effort to nurture and develop the skills necessary to connect with the children in our care.

How do we build the skills to really connect with the children in our care? There are some basic things that we can do that can set the stage for better interactions. Show respect for the children by looking at them when you are talking to them. Maintain eye contact to indicate that you are interested in them, that they are valued. When possible, get down to their level. Crouch or sit so you are not towering over the child. Being on the same level tells a child that they are not just little and unimportant, it demonstrates an equality and gives a child confidence to be their own person. This confidence helps to build healthy interactions if we, as the adults, are willing to LISTEN. Taking time to really listen is hard. Our days are busy and we have many tasks to do. Try to be aware of the adult conversations that we are having in the children’s presence. Talking over the children about other adults, the families that we work with, and issues we are having with the children is not appropriate. The children may seem to be busy but they are often hearing every word that we say. Our adult interactions and responsibilities seem so much more important and pressing but taking time to LISTEN is paramount if we are to build healthy interactions with the children in our care.

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Building Rewarding Positive Interactions with Children (continued)



Picture: A mom and her son visit the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC). The centre is busy and there are many other adults that this mom could visit with but instead she takes the time to interact with her son. They play on the floor with the blocks and she listens as he tells her what he would like to build and what he would like to do. Her son is empowered as he has the opportunity to make decisions in what he is building and what other activities he gets to participate in.

If we truly want to progress on this road of building better interactions with the children, we need to ask ourselves and reflect on a few very serious questions. Do we genuinely care about or like the children in our care? Are we truly interested in the children that we spend time with? Just as with adults, there are always some children whom we find it easier to connect with than others. Children are incredibly astute and can figure out who really likes them. As adults do we want to spend time with people who don't appear to like us or whom we don't think likes us? We seek out friends who are interested in us, who affirm us, who we have fun with. This is the same for children. They want the adults in their life to like them, to affirm them, to have fun with them and to give them confidence to explore their world without criticism or censure. If there is a child who is more difficult for you to connect with, take some time to find out what they are interested in. Make an effort to show a genuine interest in what they are doing. If there is some negative behavior; be patient and persevere, choose carefully what behaviour you can ignore, keep in mind that the goal is to build positive rewarding interactions.

“How Does Learning Happen?” says that “Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his or her surroundings, and deserves the opportunity to succeed. When we recognize children as capable and curious, we are more likely to deliver programs and services that value and build on their strengths and abilities.” It is worth the effort and time it takes to build positive rewarding interactions that create relationships which help the child build skills for a lifetime.

Source:

Ontario Ministry of Education. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2014



Intentional Home Child Care Providers

Submitted by: *Affiliated Services for Children and Youth*

Reflective Practice Is

- The process of examining yourself
- The process of examining the environment
- The process of examining your relationships with those you live and work with
- An ongoing process
- Examining who we are and where we come from
- Asking yourself questions
- Thinking about how the children, their families, and your family see things
- Asking the children, their parents, and your family their thoughts
- Looking for details
- Thinking about how your indoor and outdoor space promotes play
- Taking joy in observing and being a part of the learning and development that is happening in your home child care

Reflective practice is a tool that can help you in all areas of your life. Look at where you come from (your beliefs, culture, and life experiences), where you are going, and how you can handle things along the way. Learning to reflect on a regular basis will help you problem-solve and make helpful changes. It will remind you of the importance of setting goals and working to achieve them.

Reflection

- Allows caregivers to look at all aspects of the things that happen in their home child care environment
- Encourages caregivers to try new things rather than always doing things the same way
- Allows for changes in the learning environment that are supportive of the children you care for, their families, and your family

Intentional Home Child Care Providers

- Are intentional in their interactions with the children and their families
- Act purposefully with carefully considered goals
- Reflect on the children’s development, curiosity, and interests
- Provide materials and experiences that extend or “scaffold” the children’s learning
- Help children find the answers to their own questions
- Reflect often, set goals, and make changes as needed

Being intentional means you are fully present with the children: you give thoughtful responses to the children’s comments and questions and you adapt your curriculum to respond to the children’s interests. For example, if you are reading a book and the children are not listening, the intentional teacher will stop reading and do something to interest the children such as singing, art, or free play. By adapting your program, you have reflected on a need for a change and offered something of more interest to the children.

A fully present caregiver interacts with the children and knows that it is important for each child to be given individual time every day. The fully present caregiver also allows children to play by themselves or with other children, without interrupting. The fully present caregiver uses this time to observe, document, and reflect, whenever possible.

“How Does Learning Happen?” offers goals for intentional providers to consider and reflect on.

- Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world
- Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being
- Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses
- Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways

The document also offers many reflective questions for us to consider.

Caregivers can access the “How Does Learning Happen?” document online at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html

Sources: Ontario Ministry of Education. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2014.

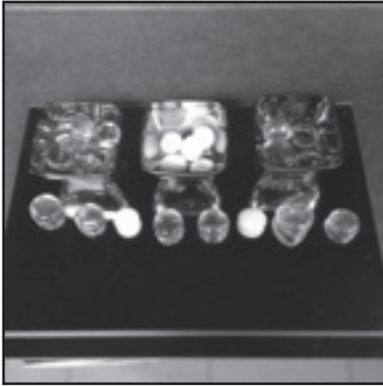
D. Curtis, D. Lebo, W.C.M. Cividanes, M. Carter. *Reflecting in Communities of Practice*. Redleaf Press, 2013.

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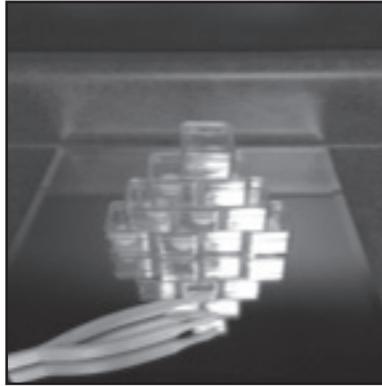
Provocations for Learning and Invitations to Play

Submitted by: The Early Childhood Community Development Centre

A provocation for learning, sometimes referred to as an invitation to play, provokes discussions, curiosity, wonder, creativity, and ideas. Provocations for learning are also a wonderful way to expand on interests and ideas for extending learning. They may be used to stimulate children's thinking, to inspire them, and to empower them to take control over their learning. They encourage children to open their minds and to be reflective.



Provocation #1



Provocation #2



Provocation #3

Above you will see some sample provocations for learning. As you can see, they are simple, use only few materials, and set up as a “hook” to see where the children's interests may be. In provocation #1, you will see a small mirror, 3 small open containers, and an assortment of glass beads. In provocation #2, we used the same mirror, 10 white glass beads, and added 10 clear boxes with lids, and a pair of tweezers. In Provocation # 3, we used the same mirror, added multi-coloured mosaic tiles, a clipboard with paper, and a pencil.

Setting up the items to spark an interest is only the first step. The key to any provocation for learning is observation, documentation, and adjusting as you go. You may have had a concept or idea in mind when you set up the provocation but the children did something completely different than what you expected.

You set up provocation #1 because you had noticed that a child loves to create patterns; but when it was introduced they focused more on sorting the colours. You would make note of your observation and then reflect on what you can do next to support this interest. How do you adjust? What questions could you ask? Perhaps you add more open containers, more colours of glass beads, or perhaps other items that could be sorted in a different way. You might add different sizes or shapes. You may want to add some paper and pencils, magnifying glasses, or even a flashlight so that the children could observe the items more closely and document what they are noticing. See what they do with these new materials, ask them open ended questions about what you are seeing, and use the information gathered to scaffold their learning. Their interest may only last a day or two or it may extend for weeks or months.

There are no right or wrong ways to set up a provocation/invitation to play and there is no right or wrong way for the children to manipulate the materials. The key is to always observe their play, document what you are seeing, and reflect on what you can add/take away to extend on their interest.



How Planning for a Theme Differs from Following the Children's Interests

Submitted by: The Early Childhood Community Development Centre

Scenario One:

A new year begins and it is time to plan what you will be doing with the children. The holidays are over, you've already talked about winter, and you have a couple weeks left before Valentine's Day so you decide to talk about construction. You bring in some hard hats and construction vests and add them to your dramatic play area. You add some tools to the block area, along with some large construction vehicles and cardboard tubes. You fashion some construction signs out of cardboard and put them outside with the ride on toys. You add several books about construction to your reading area, post some photos you found on the internet up on the walls, and search for five days worth of art experiences related to construction. In your sensory bin you add some soil and small construction vehicles. You ensure that the construction theme is introduced into every part of the children's day. You post your plans on the wall for all the parents to see so they know what their child will be doing for the next week.

Scenario Two:

A new year begins and you have a ton of wrapping paper tubes left from the holidays and you remember how much Zachary loves to build structures, so you decide to add the tubes to the block play area to extend on his interest. Just like every other day this week, Zachary heads straight to the block area after saying goodbye to his mom. He pulls out the basket of large wooden blocks and stacks them, one by one, until it's nearly as tall as him. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the tubes. He grabs them two at a time and tries to stand them up against his tower. He then adds a few more blocks to his tower and exclaims, "Now they are the same size." One of the tubes falls down so he begins to line up smaller blocks alongside the tube. One by one, the small blocks turn into a long line that is longer than the tube. Zachary shows you his "road" and says, "Look my road is longer than the tunnel." You ask him how he knew that it was "longer", if there are other things in the playroom that are longer than his tunnel, and if there is anything that is shorter. You now have two observations to make note of to show you that Zachary has an interest in measurement.

The next day you decide to add some tape measures, a clipboard with paper, and some writing tools to the block play area to encourage Zachary to document his learning. You may decide to add some tape and scissors so Zachary can make his tunnels longer or cut them down so they are shorter. When Zachary arrives for the day, he again runs directly to the block play area. He sees the new items and immediately attaches the tape measure to the waist band of his pants and sticks a pencil behind his ear. This action reminds you that Zachary's dad works as a contractor so he's likely seen his dad do this a thousand times. He begins to build his tower just as he did yesterday. When it is up to his chin he pulls out the tape measure and tries to take a measurement. The tape measure keeps snapping back before he gets it pulled out. He tries a few times without success. Sophie hears the sound of the tape measure and approaches Zachary and asks if she can help hold it for him. The two children work together to figure out the best way to measure the structure. When they finally make it work they both yell out "It's 27". Sophie decides to write a big 27 on a piece of paper.

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How Planning for a Theme Differs from Following the Children's Interests (continued)

Zachary tells you that the structure is 27 and shows you the number on the tape measure. This is a perfect opportunity to speak about what the different numbers on the tape measure mean. You could also ask him to see if he could find more items in the playroom that measured 27 inches.



Which scenario do you think sparks more excitement and curiosity for the children? Do you recall a time when your passion for something sparked new ideas and avenues to investigate?

Both scenarios introduce similar concepts. The only difference is that in scenario one you are planning for what you want to happen, or think the children would like, and in scenario two you are observing, documenting, and scaffolding as you go. You are still able to post what the children are doing for parents to see but it would evolve over the week, month, or year. Following the children's interests doesn't mean you don't plan anything, it just means that you are reflecting on your observations and incorporating ways to support those emerging interests.

“When we watch, listen, and experience new things with pleasure and true curiosity and then respond by trusting our prior knowledge and intuition, a truly engaging curriculum emerges.” Susan Stacey

Source: Stacey, Susan. *The Unscripted Classroom Emergent Curriculum in Action*. Redleaf Press, 2011.



A Day in the Life of a Home Child Care Provider

Turning a Stormy Day to Sunny Skies

Submitted by: The Ontario Early Years Centre: Brant



I recently had a particularly awful home child care day where everything just seemed to go wrong. Right from 7:00 a.m. one of the children, who was new to my program, arrived with his mom, clinging to her and screaming. Mom explained as she left, that he had been going through a very difficult time of separation anxiety. At 8:00 a.m. my husband informed me that my teenage son had left the lights on in my car all night and that the battery was dead. I had planned a trip that day to tour a local farm with the children. It wasn't going to happen!

Later, I dropped the toast for our morning snack all over the floor and the wonderful lunch that I had prepared the night before, burned to a crisp in the oven while I was dealing with everything else that was going on. To make matters even more hectic, one of my toddlers needed to be changed constantly all day because mom explained that he "had lots of beans for supper the night before because beans are his favourite". Just as the day was coming to an end, and I thought that things were turning around in my favour, an enormous spider (which happens to be my least favourite creature on earth) decided to make his way bravely across the craft table right in front of the children who were colouring. Yikes...What a day!

What a day but it could have been worse... much worse! I reminded myself of a quote that I really like by Terry Mark, "*There are those days when everything seems to just fall apart completely, but remember it's going to last just for a while and then it will be over.*" Here was an opportunity to practise the positive outlook and attitude that I was continually preaching to my own children. So, I squared my shoulders and took on the day!

Within the document "How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years" (HDLH), that I had just recently read, I was reminded of the important role that I had as an educator of young children. The first principle identified that I needed to "establish positive, responsive relationships with children and their families". As I took the hysterical toddler from his distraught mother, I promised to let her know how his day was going. He and I spent the next fifteen minutes cuddling and rocking on my rocker, looking at his favourite book over and over again until his tears dried and smiles appeared. An important connection between us had been made and he was ready to play. During the next few hours, I took a few pictures on my phone of him playing happily and sent them off to comfort his mom. I knew they would lift her spirits and would assist in building our relationship as well.

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A Day in the Life of a Home Child Care Provider

Turning a Stormy Day to Sunny Skies (continued)

My car issues created another problem. Another HDLH principle came to mind, “provide environments and experiences for children to explore ideas, investigate their theories, and interact with others in play”. I couldn’t go to the farm, but I had promised the children chickens and cows and now it seemed we would experience neither. What could we do? Together we investigated the toys in my supply cupboard. A few barns, farm animals, blocks, tractors, and farm vehicles quickly made their way onto the playroom floor. I observed their interests and watched their excited play, as they created and played together, and realized we had a great morning learning all about the farm and the animals who lived there. The children created animal masks out of cereal boxes and wrapping paper rolls. Old neckties made great cow and horse tails. When the toast was ruined, and no more bread could be found, we made a great morning snack of farm vegetables and salad greens. After all horses and cows would love these... right?

Burning lunch was another hurdle. I explained to the children what had happened and so as a group, we opened the fridge to see what was there and what we could make. Corn on the cob, ham, and potatoes made their way to the kitchen table. The children had great fun shucking the corn while I cubed the ham. Everyone helped wash the potatoes and the corn before we put them into their pots. We even made homemade applesauce together. I peeled the apples and cut them into chunks, while the children cut the apple slices into smaller pieces and put them into the pot. We had wonderful discussions about the various foods that we made. Through it all I kept thinking that what had started out as a disaster turned into a wonderful learning and sharing activity for all of us.

I spent much of the day singing “Old McDonald’s Farm” during diaper changes with my little toddler. He seemed delighted with all of the personal attention and by the end of the day could moo and oink at all the appropriate spots. He seemed quite proud of his accomplishments.

When the spider made his appearance on the craft table, one look at the children’s faces told me that this was a wonderful learning opportunity that I could not miss. Carefully, we encouraged the spider to make his way into the insect jar that I always have available. The remainder of this chaotic day was spent discovering and talking about the spider. What a wonderful way to end this day which, by the way, had turned out to be just great!

Upon reflection, I was reminded that “How does Learning Happen” also identifies four key foundations for children’s learning: Belonging, Well-being, Engagement and Expression. This document identifies that optimal learning occurs when children have opportunities to connect and express through their interests in healthy and engaging early learning environments. That is certainly what this day was all about and remains a personal goal for each and every day that I spend with the children in my home child care. Every morning, when I open my door to the first child who arrives, I am reminded of two key quotes that I carry with me all day: “Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, which affect virtually all aspects of their development.” and “Every child deserves to have someone’s eyes light up when they enter the room.”

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2014.



CAREGIVER ASKS: Where can I find more information on “How Does Learning Happen?”

Submitted by: *Affiliated Services for Children and Youth*



Figure 2. The four foundations are essential learning and development. These foundations define the path for children and educators to progress.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2014.

To access the full “How Does Learning Happen?” document online, go to www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy/html

There are several videos that support the foundations of Belonging, Well-being, Engagement, Expression, and Relationships. These videos often refer to the teacher, however, home child care provider is also a relevant and inter-changeable terminology. Several of the videos are supportive of multi-age groups.

Go to: www.edu.gov.ca/childcare/environment.html

There are 7 videos to choose from:

- “A New Perspective” (Belonging/Well-being/Engagement/Expression)
- “Supporting Curiosity and Investigation” (Engagement)
- “Questioning Our Assumptions” (Belonging/Well-being/Engagement/Expression)
- “Taking Risks, Building Competence” (Well-being/Expression)
- “Rethinking the Space” (Engagement)
- “Rethinking Time” (Engagement/Expression)
- “Investigating the Natural World” (Well-being/Engagement/Expression)

To find videos on self-regulation, go to <http://edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/selfregulate.html>

There you will find Stuart Shanker speaking on “Self-Regulation, Creating Supportive Environments”. He discusses the sources of stress in young children, the impacts of that stress, and how to help children cope with that stress. Stress affects children’s well-being.

To access the “Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children”, go to <https://www.edu.gov.ca/childcare/ResearchBriefs.pdf>

You will find 6 articles to choose from:

- “The Power of Positive Adult Child Relationships: Connection is the Key” (Belonging, Well-being, Engagement)
- “The Environment Is a Teacher” (Engagement)
- “Pedagogical Leadership” (Reflection/ Adult Engagement/ Intentional Practice)
- “Calm, Alert and Happy” (Well-being)
- “Making Learning Visible Through Pedagogical Documentation” (Expression)
- “Everyone Is Welcome: Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care” (Belonging)

Take a few minutes and log-on to your computer to read or watch one of the above articles or videos. They will give you a greater understanding of how learning happens!

Sparkle Up Your Day

Submitted by: *HN REACH*

It's a cold winter day and you are wondering what to do? How can we bring the outside inside on a cold blustery day? What can we do to grab the children's interests and see where it goes?

Mix up a batch of clean mud.

For this you will need:

- a bar of ivory soap
- a roll of toilet paper
- a cup of warm water

The first step to this activity is to remove all the toilet paper from the roll. The children particularly enjoy this part of the activity, just because on any other day it wouldn't be allowed! It doesn't matter how it gets done. They can pull the toilet paper off in one long line or break it off square by square. Put the toilet paper into a bin.

Add the cup of water to the soap and mix it till it becomes mushy.

Pour the soap mixture over the toilet paper and let the children mix it with their hands. This part will take a while. It will be clumpy at first but, as they work it between their fingers, it will become smoother. You may want to add more water if you would like a sloppier consistency. Eventually as the water evaporates, it will change, and will become moldable and mud-like. This will keep for days. When you are ready to dispose of it, be sure to throw it in the trash and not down the sink drain.

Variation: add food colouring, glitter, sequins, or whatever else might make it more interesting!

Frozen Water

Ice play is another activity that involves the senses and allows lots of opportunity for learning.

Freeze blocks of ice either outside or in your freezer. You can use different kinds of molds, such as rubber gloves, balloons, ice cube trays, cookie sheets, and muffin tins. The list of possibilities is limitless.

What can you do with all this frozen water?

Give the children eye droppers, salt water, salt shakers, or water colours and see what they come up with. Add small dinosaurs or other items to the water as it freezes so that the children can excavate the items from the ice. I partially fill my container with water and the items, freeze it, add more water, and freeze it again. This way the objects that they are excavating are not sitting right at the surface of the ice. Give the children spoons, popsicle sticks, eye droppers, salt, water, and any safe tools you may have on hand for chipping away the ice. You can talk about whether or not the items will float or sink as the children release them from the mold.

Build a fortress outdoors.

Collect tree branches and let the children stick them into the snow to build walls. If there is no snow, stand them up against structures such as a fence, deck, or garage.

You can also use small pieces of the branches at a sensory table with other items such as animals or rocks. They can be used to build a fairy garden, a construction site, or stick them into play dough. Again, the possibilities and fun are endless!



Professional Resource Centres

ASCY

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As stated in the “Early Years and Child Care Act (EYCCA), ratios as of August 31, 2015 are as follows:

A home child care provider contracted with a licensed home child care agency can care for a maximum of 6 children under the age of 13. They must:

- Count their own children under the age of 6
- Care for a maximum of only 2 children under the age of 2 including their own children

An informal (unlicensed) child care provider can care for a maximum of 5 children under the age of 13. They must:

- Count their own children under the age of 6
- Care for a maximum of only 2 children under the age of 2 including their own children

Please visit the Child Care and Early Years Act website at www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11

*The Professional Resource Centres are sponsored by different agencies in each of the four communities. Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) in Hamilton, the Early Childhood Community Development Centre in Niagara and the Ontario Early Years Centres: Brant and Haldimand & Norfolk provide these services in their respective communities. Quiet Times is published three times a year. Affiliated Services for Children and Youth, Hamilton; The Early Childhood Community Development Centre, Niagara; the Ontario Early Years Centre: Brant, Brantford; and Ontario Early Years Centre: Haldimand-Norfolk assume no responsibility for any errors and/or omissions. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring organizations. All articles submitted will be subject to editorial review. For information on reprinting material from Quiet Times, contact your area representative at the location listed on the cover of this publication.

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We are interested in hearing your comments. Your input is important to us to ensure we are providing information that is useful to you. Please feel free to contact us.

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