



WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Train and develop a positive mindset

Dear Mini-Skool Family,

Your thoughts become your reality.
So focus on the good, the positive, and the beautiful in life.
What you focus on expands.



I hope 2026 has started well for each of you. I pray it will be a prosperous and productive year! With the start of a brand-new year comes opportunities for self-improvement. Let's start with our mindset! Many successful individuals believe that we become what we focus on. So, what have you been focused on?

My continued goal for 2026 is to focus on the things I can change and to pray about those that are beyond my sphere of control. Remember the saying, "If you can't change the situation, change how you think about it." Have you tried it? It really is a big "game changer" to a more peaceful and contented mind, which paves the way for healthy interactions😊

Here are some tips to clear your mind when you find yourself focused on things that you cannot change:

- Pray and meditate
- Go for a walk outdoors
- Workout
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Do a favourite activity (art, solve a puzzle, dance, etc.)
- Challenge your thoughts (examine their validity, consider alternative thoughts, etc.)
- Journal your thoughts
- Identify your circle of things you can control and focus on that.
- When faced with difficult, immovable circumstances, we tend to overthink things. This can lead to "self-sabotage". It may help to question your beliefs/perspectives about the issue and to change your attitude toward it.

TIPS TO CALM YOUR MIND



(Tracy-Ann Brown-Chung, Director of Operations, Head Office)

Staying stuck based on how you feel about the issue may cause undue stress, which can lead to other issues. If feeling overwhelmed, seek professional help.

While it may seem hard to do at first, adapting a 'letting go' mindset may help us to move forward. What are some things that you can let go of in 2026?



Wisdom With Whiskers Counselling (Facebook post).

It may be better to adopt an 'acceptance mindset' – accept things for what they are or change how you view them. Now, this doesn't mean that there isn't room for change. Some things will need you to attend to work that results in evolution. However, having the right mindset will help you to determine those opportunities. Make 2026 your year to train and develop your mindset. You got this!

10 things to let go of



@happiness_with_lily

(Tracy-Ann Brown-Chung, Director of Operations, Head Office)

Child Care Centre Licensing Standards



Child Care Licensing System

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 Licensing Standards Licensed childcare centres must meet and maintain specific provincial standards set out in Ontario Regulation 137/15 General. These standards address items that affect quality in a licensed childcare centre, such as staff/child ratios, physical environment, staff qualifications, and children's health and wellbeing.

A review of the Childcare Licensing Manual will provide access to information about the legislative and regulatory requirements for licensed childcare Centres. It includes information on:

- Mandatory requirements as set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and Ontario Regulation 137/15.
- The rationale for requirements and why they are important in childcare Centres.
- Special instructions to help childcare Centres understand and interpret the requirements.
- Measures used to assess compliance with the requirements. Recommendations for alternative ways of demonstrating compliance and for enhancing program quality. [Childcare Licensing Manual link](#)

****As a reminder, each Centre is required to review the Pre-Licensing Renewal Checklist, as earlier visits from the Ministry is likely.**

(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

CECE Professional Advisory: Duty To Report



Professional Advisory: Duty to Report

Professional advisories are developed for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). They communicate the important legal requirements that RECEs must know and understand. Developing this resource is part of the College of Early Childhood Educators' (College) ongoing commitment to advise RECEs on their roles and responsibilities set out through legislation.

This professional advisory communicates the requirement to report child abuse and neglect, the suspicions of harm or the risk of harm to children, under section 125 of the ***Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*** (CYFSA). RECEs have a responsibility to protect children from harm. It is essential that they are knowledgeable about their duty to report to a Children's Aid Society (CAS) under the CYFSA.

This professional advisory is designed to:

- **Explain** the duty to report section of the CYFSA; and
- **Emphasize** the responsibilities of early childhood educators, outlined in the CYFSA and the ***Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*** (Code and Standards).

It is not intended to provide specific legal advice.

Duty To Report Key Points



Staff Workshop (2025)

Key Points:

- Each staff member has an individual duty to report any form of suspected child abuse.
- Reports are to be made within the 24-hour timeframe.
 - Staff - call Children's Aid Society (CAS)
 - Centre Director & Designates - call CAS, report to your Program Advisor at the Ministry of Education and report the RECE to the College of Early Childhood Educators.
- Child, Youth and Family Services also regulates this legislation.
- A staff can call and ask CAS for clarification if you are not sure if a situation of concern is reportable.
- Staff have a responsibility to:
 - the child first (their safety and well-being)
 - to the families (for the safety of their child)
 - to your colleagues (mentor each other)
 - to the community (provide quality programs, support children and families, build connections and collaborate with community partners)
- Self-care practices are important and beneficial for staff.
 - Ask for help. Request support from your room team or centre director. Or seek professional counselling where needed.
 - Know your emotional limits and triggers. Plan ahead.
 - Maintain a positive outlook on life.
 - Incorporate self-care practices into your daily lives to promote an efficient work-life balance.

(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

College Of ECE Practice Guideline Supporting Positive Interactions with Children (June 2017)

Positive Interactions: Reflecting on Strategies

Challenging behaviours inevitably arise when working with children. Nonetheless, the majority of interactions can be positive despite the challenging moments. Responsive relationships are especially important when challenges occur.

RECEs who adopt a “caring dialogue” with children and families are well positioned to support children in their ability to self-regulate and anticipate and respond to challenges and conflicts.

(Blaxall, 2015)

RECEs can consider a variety of strategies for coping with challenging behaviours depending on the context. Standard II: C.4 from the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* reinforces the expectation of RECEs to “respond to the uniqueness of individuals and groups of children. They identify appropriate strategies, access the necessary resources and design curriculum to ensure full participation of all children, taking into account ability, cultural and linguistic diversity and Indigenous identity. They provide all children with opportunities for engagement, exploration and expression.”

Consider:

- The resources provided throughout this guideline.
- Current evidence-based research.
- Workplace policies and procedures.
- Your education and training.
- Local or virtual communities of practice on the topic.
- Seeking support from your colleagues, supervisors, pedagogical leaders or community resource persons.

All strategies must be intentionally and thoughtfully developed. They evolve and change based on the context, age or developmental needs of children. RECEs must be ready to approach challenging behaviours consistently and make sure they meet the needs of individual children. Some children may need additional supports and RECEs must anticipate and respond appropriately to all children.

Strategies can be indirect, for example by focusing on how children are grouped together or by creating sensory experiences in the learning environment. Other strategies can be more direct and require educators to ignore certain behaviours, actively listen to children expressing themselves or intervene with words.

You are not alone! Educators require a support system when developing strategies. RECEs need to communicate and collaborate with families, colleagues and community resource persons in order to develop helpful strategies for their professional practice.



(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

The Learning Environment

It is important that RECEs "design and modify indoor and outdoor learning environments to support children's self-regulation, independence, reasonable risk-taking, meaningful exploration and positive interactions" (Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Standard III: C.6).

The following tips and reflection questions highlight strategies to support positive interactions through the learning environment:

- Create a welcoming and inviting environment, keeping in mind that the environment is the "third teacher." (*How Does Learning Happen?*, 2014)
- Reflect on the social atmosphere such as individual temperaments, sensitivities and personalities as well as group dynamics.
- Consider stimuli in the learning environment such as sound levels, visuals and the number of adults and children in the space that may or may not contribute to the efforts of children and staff to self-regulate.
- Review the indoor room set-up and how it contributes to children's well-being and behaviour:
 - What areas draw children in and which ones do not attract children?
 - Is there a quiet place available for children to have their own space?
 - Are there too many large, open spaces? Is there too much furniture?
- Consider how outdoor spaces contribute to children's well-being and behaviour:
 - What does the outdoor environment offer?
 - What daily opportunities are there to explore the natural world?

- What daily opportunities are there for children to take reasonable risks?
- How are the children challenged?

- Reflect on play materials and how they contribute to children's well-being and behaviour:
 - Is there diversity in materials (e.g. natural, sensory, blocks etc.)?
 - What are the opportunities for choices to be made?
 - How are the materials open-ended?
 - How do the materials support a range of interests, temperaments and group dynamics?
 - How do the materials support problem-solving, inspire curiosity and require turn-taking?
- Reflect on Standard III: C.8 from the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* that reminds you to "consider how the environments affect children through daily care routines and transitions including meal times and snacks, personal care, sleep or rest time."
 - How can you rethink transitional spaces to reduce challenges?
 - How have you communicated expectations during transitions?
 - What can you do to better support and empower children to help themselves and others to communicate their needs?

Visit college-ece.ca to read the College's article "Gabaagang gives children a space of their own" for an example of the value of creating a quiet space for children.



(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

“An observant and sensitive educator can often pick up on a child’s nonverbal cues and intervene before behavioural messages are sent. In these situations the goal is to help children communicate intentionally rather than behaviourally what they are feeling and what they need. It will be effective if the educator listens and responds in a helpful way.”

(Blaxall, 2015)

Anticipate and Prevent Challenges

The following tips and questions encourage educators to reflect on their role in anticipating and preventing challenges, an important strategy to support positive interactions.

- Reflect on how observant you are of children during play (e.g. non-verbal cues, group dynamics.)
- How physically and emotionally available are you to the children?
- How well do you actively listen to children by giving them time and space to express themselves?
- When you engage in play with children, how do you ensure you have face-to-face interactions:
 - Are you a play partner?
 - Do you know when to intentionally remove yourself from play or an interaction?
 - What do you do or say to steer a challenging moment into a more positive interaction between children?
- Consider the ways in which you help prepare children for the next activity and reflect on how you can individualize your expectations.
- Reflect on children’s interactions, emerging friendships and how they problem-solve and seek adult support. What can you do to encourage their hard work?



(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

Direct Intervention

The following tips and reflection questions encourage educators to consider on how to directly intervene when challenges arise.

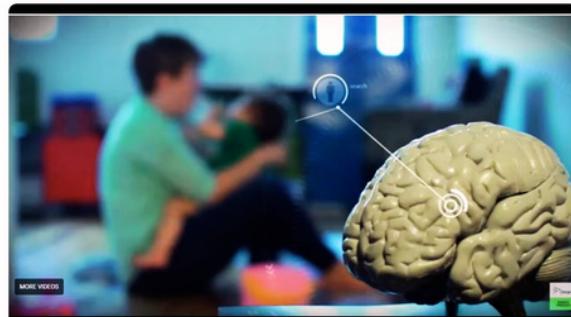
- Be consistent and use clear, developmentally appropriate language when setting limits and boundaries.
- Be flexible and prepared to change your strategies, interventions and problem-solving approaches in order to meet the needs of individuals and group dynamics.
- Are there behaviours and situations worth ignoring? Reflect on strategies for re-directing and distracting children when appropriate.
- Model positive emotional expression by acknowledging and labelling your own emotions
- Always maintain a positive view of each child when deciding your response:
 - What is the child showing you they need in order to return to a state of calm? Do they need a hug, a quiet space or natural and logical consequences?
 - How can you support children to cope, solve problems and return to a state of calm? Show children you believe in them.
 - Reflect on whether you use the words “good,” “bad” or “nice” throughout your day? What do these words communicate to children? What words are useful?

- Model problem-solving strategies.
- Look beyond challenging behaviour, observe potential causes and stressors and react warmly and supportively to a child who is in a state of dysregulation.
- Acknowledge and positively reinforce children’s hard work in a meaningful way and be specific when describing actions and reactions.
- Seek support and advice from colleagues, supervisors or community resource persons.

Reflect on the video *Brain Development: Connecting vs. Directing* as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s resource *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children*.

In this video, Dr. Clinton (2014c) reinforces the idea that challenges with behaviour are reduced when educators connect with children first, rather than direct behaviour.

Brain Development by Dr. Jean Clinton
YouTube · Our Kids Network · Feb 6, 2024



Click to watch

* Visit college-ece.ca/practiceguideline to access all the videos in this guideline.



News from the Health and Safety Committee:

Winter 2026

Hello everyone,

As everyone is aware, we have had some very unusual winter weather at times, one day it is mild and pleasant, next, we are having rain (sometimes freezing rain) throughout the day, then out of nowhere, a snowstorm occurs where road and walking conditions are challenging and potentially dangerous. We are reminding everyone of the potential for slips and falls on black ice in the parking lots, especially in the early mornings and later in the evenings. It is very important that we take our time and pay attention to our surroundings. When going outdoors with the children, it is very important that everyone wears the proper clothing and footwear. We spend so much time taking care of the children that sometimes we forget about ourselves.

Please ensure the following when going outdoors.

- Children and staff are appropriately dressed for the weather.
- Children go outside every morning and afternoon each day. Always check the weather at the beginning of the day.
- Whenever there is an extreme cold weather alert, please keep the children inside and provide some indoor gross motor activities.
- Scraper mats have recently been purchased for the centres; please encourage the children to use them when they are returning from outside, as this will prevent the tracking of snow into the classrooms

As always, please reach out to your Director if there are any potential health & safety issues regarding weather conditions. Chris and I are always available to assist when necessary.

Thank you, hope you have a great and safe Winter season!

Dave & Chris
Health & Safety Management Committee

(Dave Diaz, Human Resource Manager and H&S representative, Head Office)

Teachers' Tips

Dressing For Winter

New to Canada?

10°

5°

0°

-10°

-15°

-20°

Hat

Jacket

Boots

Mittens

Snowsuit

Boots

Scarf

Hat

Sweater

Mittens

www.settlement.org/dressingforwinter

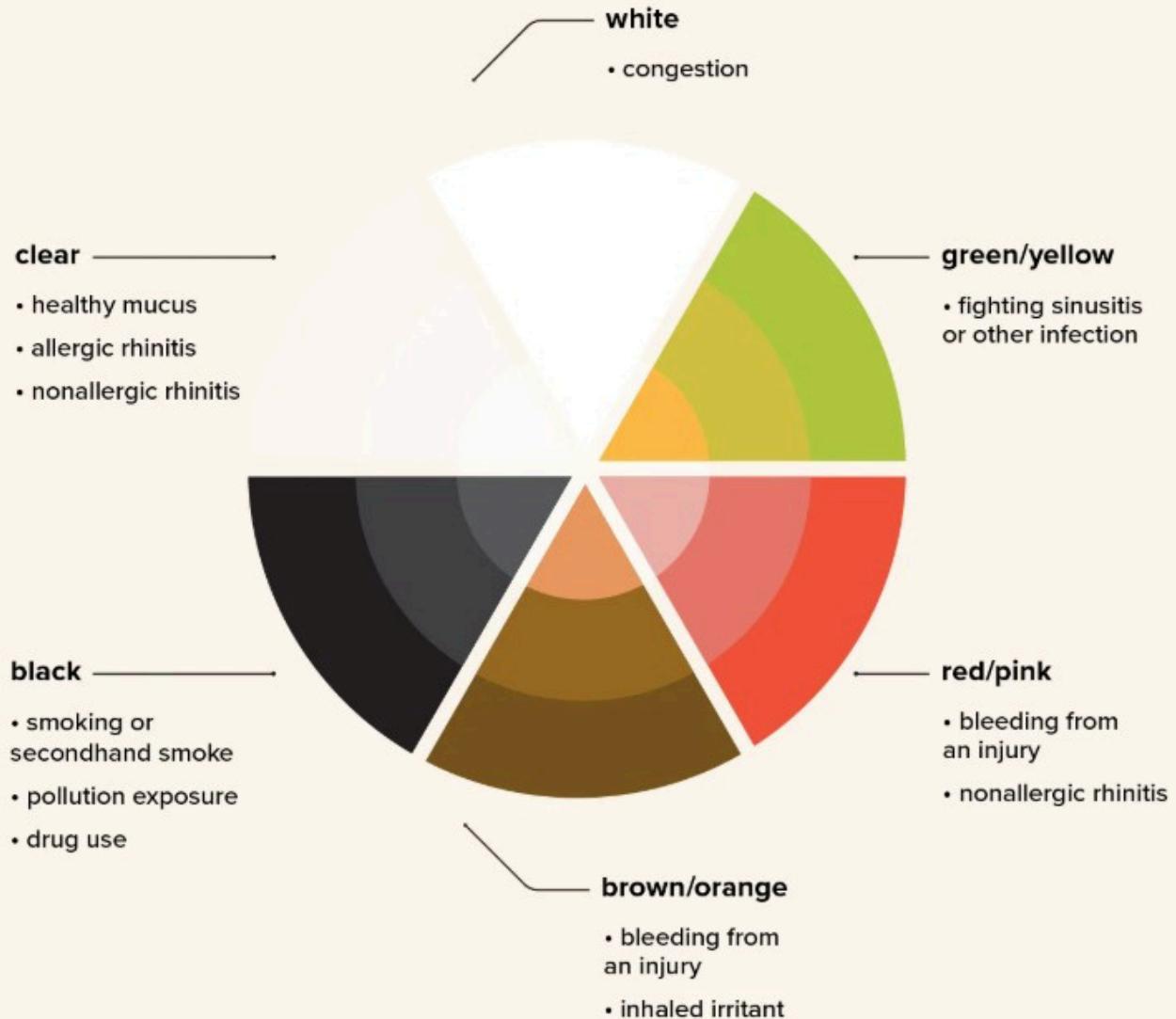
Funded by  Government of Canada
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

 CMAS
Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

What does your snot colour mean?

Different snot colors

and their causes



healthline

12 SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Alert and Engaged



heartmindonline.org



Secure and Calm

1. Take a Time-In



Spend 5 minutes in a calm, quiet space with the child. Connection is a key component of self-regulation.

2. Listening Break



Auditory stimulation such as a meditation, soothing music, or an audio book can help re-focus children's attention.

3. Rainbow Breath



Inhale and raise your arms above your head, painting a rainbow with your fingers! Exhale and return arms to your sides. Deep breathing regulates the vagus nerve.

4. Sing Vowel Sounds



Singing long, open vowel sounds such as "ahh" and "ohh" can balance sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

5. Face Painting



Pretend to "paint" the child's face in imaginary hues with the tip of your finger to provide sensory input.

6. Cool Down



Offer the child a cool glass of water or a popsicle, or run their wrists under cold water to help their nervous system reset.

7. Smell the Flowers



The scent of lavender can reduce anxiety. Mindfully smell fresh or dried lavender flowers with the child, focusing on how the smell makes them feel.

8. Move Like Animals



Invite the child to move like an animal that they would like to feel like, such as a carefree bird or proud lion. Somatically, this can help them shift their state.

9. Smiling Contest



See how long you can smile for together! Turning a frown upside down can really make you feel happier!

10. Tense and Release



Invite the child to clench their fists as tight as they can, then exhale to release. Repeat with various body parts to lower cortisol levels and heart rate.

11. Freeze Dance



Play upbeat music and instruct the child to freeze every time the music stops. Linking movement to their senses helps children regulate their bodies and minds.

12. Reflect Together



Fostering a self-reflective environment can help children learn to make better self-regulation choices in the future.

Winter Outdoor Play

Fresh air in the colder months brings big benefits. With proper winter gear, children can safely enjoy outdoor play that strengthens immunity, boosts mood, and encourages healthy gross-motor development.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society – “Outdoor Play in Winter” (cps.ca)

The Benefits of Routine in Winter

Shorter days and chilly mornings can impact children’s energy and sleep patterns. Maintaining consistent routines—especially with bedtime, meals, and morning transitions—helps children feel safe, grounded, and emotionally regulated throughout the season.

Source: Sleep Foundation – “Children & Seasonal Changes” (sleepfoundation.org)

WINTER HIGHLIGHTS

As we settle into the winter season, we want to remind families of the many meaningful ways this time of year supports children’s growth, well-being, and joy.

Winter Mental Wellness

Reduced sunlight and colder weather can influence mood for both children and adults.

Simple strategies such as outdoor walks, creative indoor play, warm conversations, and predictable routines can support mental wellness during the winter months.

Source: CAMH – “Maintaining Mental Wellness in Winter” (camh.ca)

Fun Family Winter Activities

Winter is the perfect opportunity for families to connect. Try a snowy nature walk, a warm baking day, winter crafts, indoor obstacle courses, or cozy story time. These small shared moments help children build memories, creativity, and a sense of belonging.

Source: Canadian Children’s Literacy Foundation (childrensliteracy.ca)

Employees of the Quarter



Rosa Palumbo, Early Childhood Assistant, Bramalea Centre

"My name is Rosa Palumbo, I have worked at Mini-Skool for 8 years. Working at Mini-Skool is truly a Experience and by "experience" I mean a daily adventure involving unpredictable noise levels, glitter that defies the laws of physics, and who somehow manage to stay sane through it all."

"We are pleased to share that the staff have selected Rosa as our Employee of the Quarter. This recognition speaks to the deep appreciation and respect her colleagues have for her. Rosa consistently demonstrates exceptional reliability, punctuality, and a strong work ethic. Her dedication to the children, her team, and the overall flow of the centre is truly commendable. On behalf of Javair and Ntsiki, we extend our warmest congratulations. Thank you, Rosa, for your outstanding commitment and the positive impact you make every day."

Ntsiki and Javair, Centre Managers, Bramalea



Johnnie Chen, Chef Richmond Hill Centre

"Thank you to Mini-Skool for selecting me as Employee of the Quarter. I truly appreciate the recognition and the support from such an amazing team. It means a lot to be part of a workplace that values the care and effort we put into supporting the children every day."

"We are proud to recognize Chef Johnnie as our Employee of the Quarter. Johnnie truly stops at nothing to ensure that both our staff and, most importantly, our children are well cared for. His dedication goes far beyond preparing meals—he consistently goes the extra mile to make sure every child receives the nourishment they need to grow, learn, and thrive in our centre. Johnnie's commitment, reliability, and heart do not go unnoticed. Whether it's taking time out of his day to pick up items we may be missing, adjusting meals to meet individual needs, or simply always being there when we need him, Johnnie shows up with care and consistency every single day. Thank you, Johnnie, for your hard work, your dedication, and everything you do to support our children, families, and team. We are truly grateful to have you as part of our Mini-Skool family."

Sabrina Campacci and the Team at Richmond Hill, Mini-Skool



“My time at Mini- Skool has spanned thirty years and while there have been many changes in the field and our Centre, one thing that has not changed is my passion for working with children. I have worked with every age group and have had a positive impact on young lives, building lasting relationships and aiding the growth and development of the children in our care. It is something you never forget and neither do the children. Although it makes me feel old when former children come back years later to visit to work to even enroll their own children and remember the impact I had on their lives -that’s the reason I have stayed in the field as long as I have!”

**Annette Donaldson,
Registered Early Childhood
Educator,
Bromsgrove Centre**

“We are proud to recognize Annette Donaldson as our Employee of the Quarter, selected her coworkers in recognition of her outstanding dedication, professionalism, and passion for early childhood education. Annette consistently goes above and beyond in her role as a preschool educator. She creates a warm, nurturing, and engaging learning environment where children feel safe, valued, and excited to learn. Her ability to build meaningful relationships with both children and families is truly exceptional, and she approaches each day with patience, creativity, and a genuine love for her work.

She is a strong team player who leads by example, supports her colleagues, and contributes positively to the overall culture of our centre. Her reliability, initiative, and commitment to best practices reflect the high standards we strive for as a program.

Management is grateful for the impact Annette has on our children, families, and staff. Her dedication does not go unnoticed, and we are thankful to have her as such an important part of our team. Congratulations, and thank you for all that you do.”

Renise & Betty, Centre Managers, Bromsgrove Centre

Mini-Skool's Operation Christmas Child 2025 Initiative - Total collection

Thanks to our Mini-Skool Team and Clients!
We collected and donated 419 Shoe Boxes of Gifts.

Congrats to our outstanding Centres:
Bramalea(216) & Cawthra (116)



(Gail Williams-Miller, Marketing and Program Support Manager, Head Office)

Our Centres' Program Activities, Events and Celebrations

Cawthra Centre



Cawthra Centre



Cawthra Centre



Cawthra Centre



We know you have been waiting and the time is finally here

CONGRATULATIONS

Room 10



You are the winners of our pumpkin carving contest.
Thank you everyone for your participation.



Bramalea Centre

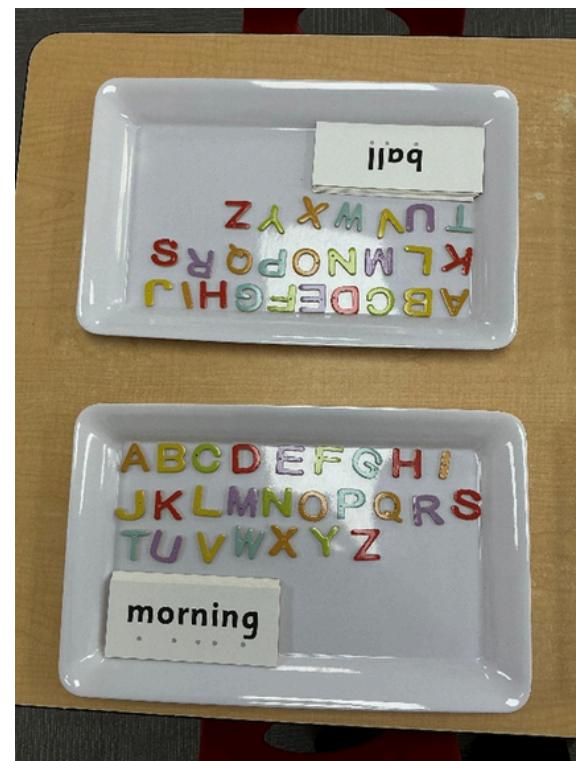


Richmond Hill Centre

Room 10 children coloured their letters and shared their Christmas wishes with teachers and peers. Teachers supported the children by helping them write down their wishes and encouraging conversation during the activity. The children showed pride in their work and excitement as they talked about mailing their letters to Santa. This activity supported children's sense of belonging as they shared ideas together, encouraged well-being through joyful participation, promoted engagement through creative expression, and allowed children to express their thoughts and feelings in meaningful ways.

HARVEST OF LIGHT

Richmond Hill Centre



Bromsgrove Centre



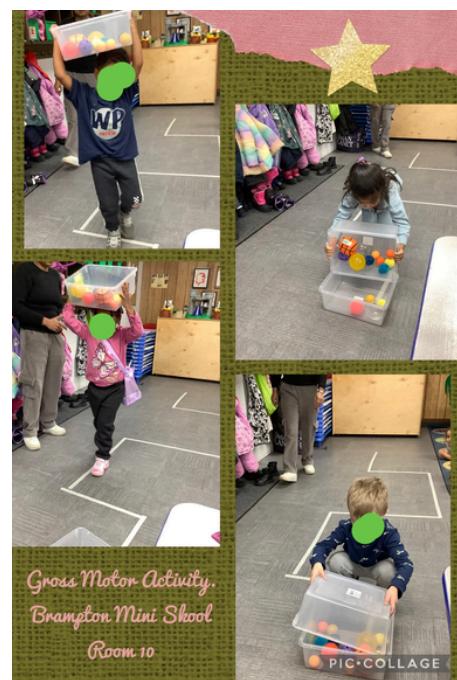
I. Social

- 1.1 Making friends, 1.2 Conflict Resolution and Social Problem Solving Skills, 1.5 Interacting Positively and Respectfully, 1.6 Co-operation
- 3. Communication and Literacy
- 3.1 Using Verbal and Nonverbal Communication, 3.3 Vocabulary, 3.4 Conversing with Peers,
- 3.6 Listening to Others
- 4. Cognition
- 4.1 Self Regulation, 4.2 Problem Solving

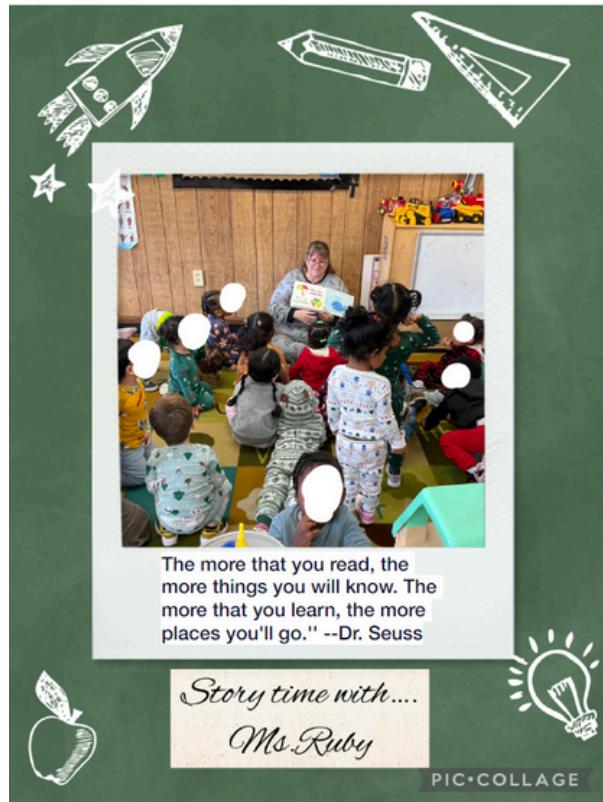


PIC COLLAGE

Brampton Centre



Brampton Centre



Room 5 Toddlers Brampton
Decorating Christmas Cookies



Your hard work, leadership, and unwavering commitment to our children, families, and community truly mean so much. The care, passion, and professionalism you bring each day have shaped Mini-Skool into what it is today and continue to make a lasting difference in the lives we serve across the GTA. We are incredibly grateful and blessed to have such a dedicated and compassionate team. Thank you for all that you do—please keep up the amazing work.

Your ideas are important and is appreciated. Please email your submissions for our **Spring 2026 Newsletter by Friday, April 10, 2026, to gail@mini-skool.ca.**