Carousel Players

. . . THEATRE YOU NEVER OUTGROW . . .

EARLY YEARS DRAMA PILOT PROGRAM REPORT

AN ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION SEED GRANT PROJECT

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Our Early Years Drama Pilot program is the first of its kind in Niagara, integrating proven education techniques, professional artists, and continual assessment to develop a program suitable for the Early Years arts-based learning environment in the Region. The goal for this program is to provide pre-elementary school children with engaging and meaningful arts-based experiences to support their overall development and wellness.

Program Details

From January to March 2020, our trained artist educators traveled to three of Niagara's daycares and EarlyON centres* to provide this specialized drama program for children aged 0 to 6 years. Each lesson was 25-30 minutes long and ran once a week for 10 weeks. Working within these existing learning environments provided arts-based learning to pre-school children with no barriers of geography or cost as we were able to offer the program to child care centres for free. We worked with consultants from Brock University's Early Childhood Education Program, the Niagara Emergent Literacy Consortium, local daycares, and the EarlyON Centre network to develop and implement this accessible program.

The second session was scheduled to run from March to June of 2020 however the spread of COVID-19 and subsequent provincial lockdown interrupted the end of the first session and suspended the start of the second session until 2021. The second session was held virtually from March to May of 2021 through the Port Cares' EarlyON centre for families from across the Niagara region.

**EarlyON centres are free, family-centred environments where parents and children learn and play together.*

EARLY LITERACY & THE ARTS

WHY IS EARLY LITERACY SO IMPORTANT?

"Play and academic work are not distinct categories for young children: creating, doing, and learning are inextricably linked. When children are engaged in purposeful play, they are discovering, creating, improvising, and expanding their learning" (CMEC Statement on Play-Based Learning).

The early years of a child's life are foundational in initiating and building early literacy skills like letter knowledge, vocabulary, print motivation, narrative skills, print awareness, and phonological awareness. These skills not only introduce children to reading, but also prepare them for in-school learning and their future education.

According to the National Strategy for Early Literacy Report, more than 1 in 4 Canadian children entering their first year of school "are significantly behind their peers" and those who are disadvantaged upon entering Grade 1 "tend to fall further and further behind their peers as they progress through the school years" (18). Our program introduces literacy skills to children and their parents/guardians as early as possible and reinforces those skills often and repeatedly through weekly drama activities.

NOTABLE PROGRAM SUCCESSES

Despite the disruption, we achieved many of our program goals over the initial 10 weeks and learned how to create and run an enriching, accessible arts-based Early Years Drama Program. This report will provide an overview of the program's five stages of development: working with schools and centres, support for families, program development and tailoring, program delivery, and evaluations and learnings. Here is an overview of our successes:

We crafted a drama education curriculum for preschoolers to support children's positive sense of identity, problem-solving, social, and communication skills, and emergent literacy behaviours through dramatic play.

We tested and found the program successful in a 25-30 minute format both in person and virtually. Childcare centres and parents alike expressed a desire for our Early Years drama-based learning program in more than 4 Niagara municipalities.

We provided local artist educators with specialized professional training in early literacy, early childhood development, and drama-in-education for preschool-aged children.

We found the best practices for working with different child care centres, and the impact of those learning environments on our curriculum and program delivery.

We discovered the ways Carousel Players can best support families, their young children and their communities with our experience in arts-based education.

We found the developed curriculum had a noticeable impact on the children's learning outcomes and fostered an appreciation for theatre with participating families.

WHY DRAMA?

"Drama and literacy are cut from the same cloth, both are about meaning making, expression, and communication." (Griffin et al. 12)

The inextricable link between play and learning for young children makes drama an ideal format to develop and build early literacy skills. Like literacy, drama is founded on communication and expression; it is a flexible and adaptable art form that gives participants agency to explore, imagine, and grow at their own pace. By building literacy skills into our drama program, we introduce or reintroduce early literacy to children and caregivers through the lens of arts-based play.

WHY DRAMA? CONT.

The New Victory Theatre conducted a longitudinal study tracking the impact of theatre on children in low socioeconomic conditions. The study found the participants' exposure to the performing arts encouraged "social and emotional growth, support their school engagement, and develop their ability to imagine the future" (Schmidt Chapman and Halpern 4). They also found that children need to be "introduced to the live performing arts as early as possible, ideally prior to the age of eight" in order to feel that "theater is for someone like me" (ibid).

Through dramatic play, our program introduces and provides a microcosm of the characteristics and benefits of the performing arts to families in their own childcare settings. Families who may never have experienced theatre are introduced to the building blocks of performance in a familiar and safe setting. They engage in imaginative play exploring emotions, movement, perspective, and more before the age of 6. In doing so, children and their parents/guardians are given the opportunity to discover and experience the fundamental benefits of the performing arts.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

For young children, creating, doing, and learning are inextricably linked. When children are engaged in purposeful play, they are discovering, creating, improvising, and expanding their learning. (CMEC Statement on Play-Based Learning)

Our curriculum was created in November of 2019 by Kari-Lynn Winters, an Associate Professor (PhD, MA) at Brock University's Department of Educational Studies. Kari-Lynn knew we would be working with a wide range of preschool children (ages ~2-6) and chose to develop our curriculum inspired by kindergarten curricula rather than early learning curricula. This approach allowed the curriculum to be easily scaffolded and simplified for younger children, but also ensured older children in the program did not get bored or frustrated by the simplicity of the lessons.

The resulting curriculum documents* emulate Ontario's "The Kindergarten Program, 2016" format as it has the same four curricular frames: Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-Being, Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours, and Problem-Solving and Innovating. Kari-Lynn developed the curricular objectives and themes through the lens of drama and early childhood education with a focus on engaging children through the five senses; sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound enable us to take in and interpret the world, develop empathy, and build humans who are responsive, critical thinkers. She included 4-6 guiding questions for each of the ten weeks that encourage sense exploration, made the curriculum more accessible to educators who are not practiced in using curricula, and helped inspire all educators to take a play- and inquiry-based approach to lesson planning.

**See Appendix for curriculum documents and lesson plan templates.*

WORKING WITH DAYCARES & CENTRES

We started the program development by meeting with April Shaw, our consultant from the Niagara Emergent Literacy Consortium. She provided insight into Niagara's EarlyON centres, their policies, locations, and programming, and recommended several centres that might be interested in the program. She also gave our educators a workshop on the children's stages of development and literacy which was invaluable training. We contacted daycares who attended our early years theatre performance in 2019 to gauge their interest in the program. In the first term from January to March 2020 we brought the program to St. Thomas Daycares in St. Catharines and two EarlyON centres located at Kate S. Durdan Public School in Niagara Falls and the Seaway Mall in Welland.

In the second term our program ran from March to May of 2021 and was hosted by Port Cares, which operates EarlyON Centres in Port Colborne, Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Fort Erie and in Welland's Seaway Mall. EarlyON Centres moved to virtual programming because they were temporarily closed due to the pandemic. Both forms of the program helped us learn about working with daycares and centres.

Safety

The artist educators and program coordinator all required vulnerable sector checks completed within 6 months of attending/teaching at the daycares and EarlyONs. We provided these to the child care centres in advance of the program. We were also asked by St. Thomas Day Cares to provide Proof of Liability Insurance as we were in a “community room” of the church, separate from the daycare facilities.

Scheduling

Our program was scheduled for two morning slots (9:30am or 10am) and one afternoon slot (3:30pm); the former worked best for most daycares and EarlyON centres while the latter received less participants in the early years age group. We offered Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays as the program day to each child care centre. Mid-week programs were less likely to be interrupted by holidays or PD Days throughout the year. The EarlyON centres often chose a high-traffic day of the week when they had space in their calendars for the sessions during a time that would not disrupt their daily schedules.

In Person Spatial Requirements

A 400 sq.ft. room separate from other child care centre activities was ideal for this program as it minimized distractions and allowed everyone to spread out and move freely. The EarlyON centres we worked with had either one main room for all activities or multiple rooms without separation from the main room. These settings were challenging to work in as there were many toys and activities that sometimes distracted the participants. St. Thomas Day Cares was unique in that they were part of a large church and had a ~900 sq. ft. room separate from the daycare available for our use, which was ideal.

Virtual Requirements

Port Cares hosted our virtual program sessions using their Zoom account, but made the educators “co-hosts” to allow them to share screens when/if they had visuals or storybooks to show the participants. The educators required laptops with both a microphone and video camera, access to stable internet, and a well-lit space large enough for them to move around in. All participants were asked to mute for the duration of the program to prevent sound pollution and ensure everyone could hear the educator clearly.

PROGRAM DELIVERY & TAILORING

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Daycares and EarlyONs preferred to collect the program registrations for the program and pass them on to the Carousel Players' coordinator. The coordinator then sent parents a letter with program information, a photo release form, and a form giving permission for their child to participate in the program. The centres collected these documents from parents as they found parents prefer to do paperwork in person rather than fill out a survey online.

Kate S. Durdan Public School had an EarlyON centre with children 3.5 years old and younger and a YMCA Daycare with children ages 4-6. For a few program sessions the YMCA Daycare children participated in the program at the EarlyON centre. We found the older daycare children were familiar with expectations about circle time (i.e. sitting in one place, listening to the educator, not talking over others, etc.). They were able to focus for longer periods of time and, consequently, so were the younger children from the EarlyON centre who emulated them. Those children not participating in circle time still engaged in the activities while outside of the circle by watching, listening to stories being read, and singing along to songs.

Accessibility

Carousel Players' principal mandate and vision are ensuring our programs are accessed by all children and families regardless of their socioeconomic background. We believe theatre develops artistic awareness, learning skills and a sense of well-being in children. We were able to offer this program for free to the families at participating child care centres because of the funding provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. In hosting this program at free, family-centred environments like EarlyON centres we reached families who may not have had the funds to afford daycare, and provided an artistic experience for all parents who participated with their children.

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that children from low socioeconomic circumstances are less likely to have the same literacy skills as other children by the time they reach kindergarten; by age 3, children in low-income homes will have heard 1/3 as many words as children in middle-high income homes. By the time of school entry, this number is closer to 50%. (https://www.strongstart.ca/research/literacy-facts/).

ESL Families

At one EarlyON centre we found many of the families and children spoke English as their second language. We adapted our teaching to support these families, and in doing so the program became more accessible to all families including those whose first language was English. Here's how we supported ESL families:

INTRODUCE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF ENGLISH.

The educators integrated English letters, numbers, and grammar into their lessons, but also took the time to explain and explore them in depth which helped improve the literacy skills of every participant. This helped bridge the gap between the different developmental levels and/or English-language skills of the children.

PRONOUNCE CHILDREN'S AND PARENTS' NAMES REGULARLY AND CORRECTLY.

The educators made an effort to write down and learn the names of everyone participating in the program. This made it easier to greet, encourage, and help the children focus them by calling their names out.

INVOLVE PHYSICALITY IN EVERY ACTIVITY, INCLUDING ADDING ACTIONS TO WELL-KNOWN SONGS.

The educators added movements to songs and parts of storytime. This physicality reinforced their learning by helping all the children stay focused for longer periods of time. It especially helped ESL children and the youngest children make connections between an English word and the thing itself, and the motions made it fun for everyone!

ASK SIMPLIFIED QUESTIONS AND BE PATIENT WITH RESPONSES.

The educators simplified the language they used when asking questions, making it easier for parents and children alike to answer. This also allowed the children more time to think about their answers without feeling pressured or rushed.

TAILORING TO CHILD CARE CENTRES

EarlyON centres differ from daycares in that they often operate out of large buildings like schools, churches, libraries, community centres, malls, etc. and are often either one large room or several connected rooms. Our educators tailored their teaching spaces and their lessons to better accommodate our program at both centres and daycare settings.

In Person

- If the centre/daycare approves, move chairs and tables out of the way to make the program space larger.
- If the circle time area is surrounded by bookshelves and toys, use scarves and/or sheets to cover them up and minimize distractions.
- Use music and songs to help refocus children if they are distracted, especially in settings where there is no separation between the program and other activities.

Virtual

- At the beginning of every session, let families know they will need space to move around in and allow them time to prepare that space.
- Set up the camera in front of a plain or blank wall to minimize distractions for the participants.
- Educators should have a chair to sit in during the songs and stories part of the session, as well as a space behind their chair large enough for them to move around in while staying in frame for drama and movement.

TAILORING TO AGE RANGES

Children ages 3.5 and under have very different levels of development, engagement, and focus from children ages 4-6 years. The two EarlyON centres we visited often had children who spoke English as a second language and children 3.5 years and under, all of whom needed more parent support than children 4 and up. Our educators made sure to adapt lessons and instructions (ex. counting only to 5, doing only one letter of the alphabet) to the age and language skills of the children and engage as many of the children's senses as possible to help them stay focused. They also simplified and reinforced new concepts, especially those connected to early literacy skills, to ensure every participant was following along and feeling comfortable.

CONCLUSION

EVALUATIONS & FEEDBACK

Surveys

Before the 8-week session, the Coordinator distributed longitudinal surveys to parents/guardians, early childhood educators, and Carousel Players' educators to assess the participants' initial skill level in the four curricular frames. The survey presented a scale from 1 to 5 and asked they identify the children's abilities in the following areas:

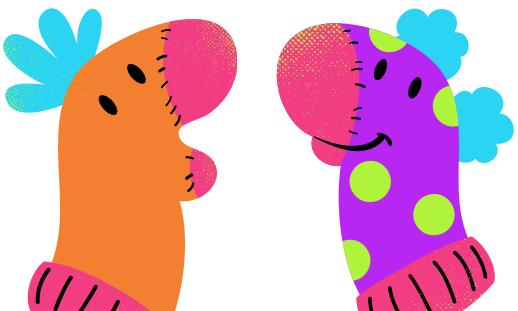
- Familiarity with numbers and letters
- Ability to add their own ideas during story and play time
- Ability to express their thoughts and feelings clearly
- Ability to focus their attention and follow instructions
- Ability to respond to the feelings of others
- Ability to imagine different things happening in a story than what is written
- Ability to use their imagination to pretend they are in a different place and/or a different person

Our educators filled out weekly surveys (see pages 25-29) in addition to the pre- and post-program surveys. The former asked them to gauge each area of learning on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being "Very Poor" and 10 being "Very Good," with the understanding that each child's experience may vary depending upon the participants' ages and stages of development.

Results

The post-program survey was distributed to families immediately after the last session and showed 80% of parents/guardians saw “some” (a 4/5 on the ranking scale) or “much” (5/5) improvement in their child’s ability in all areas. As with the caregiver and early childhood educator surveys, our educator surveys demonstrated a 70-90% improvement in the children’s learning in all four curricular frames over the 8-week program.

The most significant areas of improvement identified by all surveys showed an 80% improvement in participants’ Self-Regulation and Well-Being and Problem Solving and Innovation. We identified the former as the children’s ability to regulate their behaviour and/or when children are aware of and able to respond to the feelings of others. We identified the latter as the children’s use of problem-solving and innovation strategies when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama both individually and with others (e.g. playing with blocks, puppets, experimenting with scarves and other materials, etc).



Parent Feedback

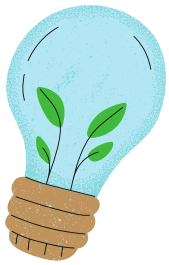
- [My son] can sit in a group or circle time for a longer period of time, more participation in group activities, more role playing.
- The program was fantastic! Nicola and Disco were so much fun, and taught the kids lots! I definitely recommend this program and will participate again when offered! Thank you!
- Thank you for offering the children an opportunity to explore and celebrate imaginative play. Especially younger kids who don't have the same opportunities that were available pre-covid, and thus have limited exposure. My daughters loved seeing Nicola and Disco every week (it's the highlight of their week!). They learned so much! Fantastic program and excellent staff (Nicola and Disco <3). Thanks again and we will definitely look out for more programs! I already registered my older daughter to your summer camp and we are both looking forward to all that she will experience and learn!
- This was so fun! My daughter at the end said she wishes she can do this every day. Thank you so much!
- We have really enjoyed these sessions. Elizabeth is great at engaging the kids during this virtual experience. Thank you!!!
- This was such a great program! Isla loved it she was extremely focused and didn’t move from her seat the whole half hour!! Please continue to have carousel players join EarlyON

LEARNINGS

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, this program reached a total of 60 families in the Niagara region. We discovered that in order to effectively deliver this form of arts education in person, the program needs to be done with smaller groups of 8-10 participants. We observed with children of this age group that the ratio of educator to participants needs to be low in order to ensure an environment of connection - each child feels seen, heard, and engaged in the drama.

Although the program was originally designed for children aged 0-6 years, 70% of our participants were between the ages of 3 and 4 years old. The children aged 2 years and younger were more likely to watch the program and participate after a few weeks of observing, and the children aged 5-6 years were engaged for the entire length of the program. Having a mix of all these ages in a session required adaptability from our educators to simplify or make their lessons more challenging based on the needs of the individuals in the group.

We found this virtual format successful in both our educator and parents/guardians' feedback, and that the educator to participant ratio can be larger online with 10-15 children at once because of the children's comfort levels. Educators running the in-person program are tasked with establishing and building the children's comfort in a new or different environment with new people. Although our virtual program educators must also nurture a safe learning environment, they work with children who are already in the safe and familiar environments of their homes. These children often have a caregiver with them who encourages and helps them refocus their attention if they become distracted.



FINAL REFLECTIONS

This program provides opportunities for creative play and self-expression that enhance and deepen the learning of children ages 2.5-6. The Ontario Ministry of Education's policy is that all children should have access to inclusive play and inquiry based learning opportunities in early elementary school. However, as Susan Key Wright proves in her research, many policies and curriculum documents "pay lip service to 'creativity' while at the same time making very little time or space for explicit teaching of skills or processes for creativity" (Wright, 2007). Through our specialized arts curriculum, Carousel Players provides a framework for actively building pre-elementary school children's creative skills with engaging and meaningful arts-based experiences to support their development.

Our educators engage the children's bodies, voices, and imaginations through drama. While our educators used and taught traditional literacy skills during their lessons, they also fostered emotional literacy and critical thinking skills which are invaluable in preparing young children to enter school settings. In offering the program at EarlyON Centres, we provided participating parents/guardians and early childhood educators with exciting approaches to practicing and building these skills through drama.

FINAL REFLECTIONS CONT.

Prior to our program, none of the parents/guardians or early childhood educators had heard of a Niagara-based drama program for children ages 6 and under. The pre-program survey revealed only three families had experienced drama or seen live theatre before our program, meaning our program introduced the performing arts to 57 families who had not previously experienced, and may never have gone on to experience, the dramatic arts. The unanimous response post-program was that families would bring their children to live theatre and sign up for drama programs in the future. Their overwhelming enthusiasm reinforces the substantial impact we have had, and will continue to have, on those Niagara-based families as they continue to support and experience the benefits of drama far into their children's futures.

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Curriculum

Week	Theme	Curricular Objective	Curricular Frames	Guiding Questions
1	I am me.	• Develop an awareness of self and others. • Listen and respond to others, both verbally and non-verbally (e.g., using the arts, using signs, using gestures and body language).	• Belonging and Contributing • Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours	• Are our friends the same as us? • Are our friends different from us? • How is our friend moving? • How many claps do our names have? • What can we say to our friends? • What might we talk about?
2	My Body.	• Demonstrate a sense of identity and a positive self-image. • Develop movement skills and concepts as they use their growing bodies to move in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts.	• Belonging and Contributing • Self-regulation and Well-Being	• What can our bodies do? Can they jump? Can they stomp? Can they melt? Can they fly? • What body part are we thinking of? • How can we move our bodies? • In what ways are our friends moving? • Do our bodies move differently when we feel happy, scared, mad?
3	My Voice	• Discuss ideas about something (e.g., a book, the meaning of a word, an event or an experience) while drawing on music, drama, dance, and/or the visual arts. • Use problem-solving strategies, on their own and with others, when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama, dance, music, and visual arts.	• Self-regulation and Well-Being • Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours	• What can our voices do? • How do feelings sound? • How should we use our voices to communicate ideas and feelings? • What should we do when someone else's voice sounds frustrated or sad?
4	My Feelings	• Communicate thoughts and feelings, and their theories and ideas, through various art forms. • Use problem-solving strategies, on their own and with others, when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama, dance, music, and visual arts.	• Self-regulation and Well-Being • Problem-solving and innovating	• What do emotions look like? • How does our body language change when our feelings change? • How do our facial expressions change when our feelings change? • Is there a better way to be mad? • Is there a better way to show sadness? • What should we do when other people are emotional?
5	My 5 Senses	• Exhibit an awareness of their surroundings. • Develop movement skills and concepts as they use their growing bodies to move in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts.	• Belonging and Contributing • Problem-solving and innovating	• What are the 5 senses? • What colours do we see? • Can you hear what I hear? • What feels soft? • If we didn't have hands, could we still feel things? • Why do some things taste/smell good to one person and bad to another?
6	My Family	• Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity among individuals and families and within schools and the wider community. • Develop an appreciation of the multiple perspectives encountered within groups, and of ways in which they themselves can contribute to groups and to group well-being.	• Belonging and Contributing • Problem-solving and innovating	• Who lives in our houses? • What are the names of my family members and how are they related to us? • What roles do family members play? • What activities do we do with our families? • Why are families important?

Curriculum Cont.

7	Count on Me (Friendships and Numbers)	• Demonstrate an understanding of numbers, using concrete materials to explore and investigate counting, quantity, and number relationships. • Display knowledge and skills gained through exposure to and engagement in drama, dance, music, and visual arts.	• Belonging and Contributing • Literacy and Mathematic Behaviours	• What makes a good friend? • How can we show our friends that we like them? • Can we count forwards to 10? • Can we count backwards from 10? • Do we know the symbols for the numbers 1-10?
8	Dinosaurs Don't… (Dinosaurs and Manners)	• Identify and use social skills in play and other contexts. • Depict problem-solving skills in a variety of contexts, including social contexts.	• Self-regulation and Well-Being • Problem-solving and innovating	• What does the past mean? • When, in the past, did things happen? • How can we make our bodies look big like a dinosaur? • How should we act when we're mad? Is it ok to be rude? • How could we act when we're disappointed? Is it ok to pout and sulk? • How might we demonstrate good manners?
9	Make a long story short (Letters and Literacy)	• Display literacy behaviours that enable beginning readers to make sense of a variety of texts. • Demonstrate an understanding and critical awareness of a variety of written materials that are read by and with their educators.	• Literacy and Mathematic Behaviours • Problem-solving and innovating	• In what ways can we move our bodies to represent the letters of the alphabet? • Do we know the alphabet symbols? • How do letters go together to create words? • What is the beginning of the story? • What happens in the middle of the story? • How does the story end?
10	Let's Get Outside!	• Show an awareness of their surroundings. • Demonstrate an understanding of the natural world and the need to care for and respect the environment.	• Belonging and contributing • Literacy and Mathematic Behaviours	• How does being outside make us feel? • How does the weather make us feel? • What activities happen when the weather/seasons change? • Who/what is affected when the weather/seasons change? • Can we count backwards from 5? • How can we take care of and respect our environment?

Lesson Plan Template

Artist Educator Name: _____ Week: _____ Date: _____

Theme & Objective	Guiding Question(s)

Book Title: _____ Materials Needed:

-
-

Opening Activity

Songs

Movement

Sensory Play

Drama Roleplay

Game/Activity

Closing Activity

Artist Educators' Weekly Observational Checklist

Week # _____ Location: _____

Other Participants? ○ Yes ○ No If yes, who and how many?_____

Evaluate each area of learning as applicable on a scale from 1 to 10: 1 being "Very Poor" and 10 being "Very Good"

Belonging and Contributing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Additional Observations: _____

_____

Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Additional Observations: _____

_____

Self-Regulation and Well-Being

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Additional Observations: _____

_____

Weekly Observational Checklist Cont.

Problem-Solving and Innovating

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Additional Observations: _____

_____

Group Strengths from This Week:
(What are the areas that the children are most interested in? What areas are they most advanced in?)

Group Needs for Next Week:
(What are the areas that the children have room to grow in? What areas would be useful to focus on for next week?)

Weekly Observational Checklist Descriptors

1. Belonging and Contributing

Children contribute to the activities by adding ideas and demonstrating the ability to take turns in activities and discussions.

It might look like...

- Engaging in play activities with others.
- Listening to peers and adults.
- Recognizing personal interests, strengths, and accomplishments.
- Contributing their own ideas to the role playing.
- Creating their own actions to a song or chant and/or following their peer's actions.

It might sound like...

- "I'm going to be an elephant. See how my trunk moves?"
- "Let's make some puppets for our play.
- "What can we use for the troll's bridge?"
- "I'm going to play in the sand today."
- "I can sing a song in my language."
- "I like it when we sing that song."
- "I helped my dad set the table."

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2. Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours

It might look like...

- Showing an understanding of the foundations/basics of words (e.g. counting syllables, recognizing that "cat" starts with a "c", identifying letters in a word, etc.) and/or the the foundations/basics of counting (e.g. counting claps, counting up to 10, etc.).
- Recognizing the shape of letters (e.g. "b" is a long line and a circle) and/or numbers (e.g. 1 is a long line, 2 is a curve and a line, etc.).
- Showing an understanding or knowledge of the alphabet and/or the sequential order of numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.).

It might sound like...

- "I know that letter."
- "It is a 'T'. It starts just like my name."
- "I know it is a 'd' because it has a ball and a stick."
- "I see a 'b' like the one in 'book'."
- "When I go forward, the numbers get bigger. When I go backwards they get smaller."

Weekly Observational Checklist Descriptors Cont.

- "Every time I add a block, my building gets taller."
- "We need 3 more blocks to finish the base."
- "The snack sign says '3 apple slices' but I took 4."

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3. Self-Regulation and Well-Being

Self-regulation is when children are able to regulate their behaviour and/or when children are aware of and able to respond to the feelings of others and they are able to control aggression. Keep in mind that the abilities of children to regulate their own emotions, behaviours, and attention increase over time with maturation, experience, and responsive relationships and so can vary depending upon their age and stages of development.

It might look like...

- Focusing their attention.
- Follow instructions.
- Cooperating with the teacher and other children.
- Remembering things they need to know and do .
- Recognizing the different emotions and how they are expressed through face, voice, and body.
- Relating to the emotions of the character in a book or drama roleplay.
- Recognizing that their "outside voice" may disturb others and using their "inside voice" instead.

It might sound like...

- Trying to be quiet while a story is being read.
- Agreeing to take turns.
- "I can do it by myself."
- "I remembered to bring my hat."
- "I'm feeling better now. I'm ready to talk."
- "I'm really frustrated."
- "She is crying because she is sad about her friend."
- "You can have this book because you like trucks."
- "Why don't you sit here, then you would feel better."

Weekly Observational Checklist Descriptors Cont.

4. Problem-Solving and Innovating

Children use problem-solving and innovation strategies when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama both individually and with others (e.g., playing with blocks, puppets, experimenting with scarves and other materials, etc).

It might look like...

- Using the materials for things other than their purpose (e.g. imagining a stick is a flag).
- Trying out different voices for parts of a story or chant.
- Using scarves to show how the wind moves on a windy day.
- Pretending they are characters from the story.
- Creating their own drama roleplay.
- Finding different ways to move.
- Using actions, pictures, words, or puppets to tell a story at the dramatic play.

It might sound like...

- "The troll needs a deep growly voice – he would talk like this. But the littlest Billy Goat Gruff would talk like this (in a high squeaky voice)."
- "I'll be the bus driver."
- "I'm batman, look at my cape!"
- "I'll be the troll. He has an angry face and voice. I'll stand under the bridge and growl."
- "That puppet show we saw was just like the story we read."
- "I was a leaf falling. I started up high, then I spun around, then I fell on the ground."