

WELCOME

to MacEwan University's Child Care Centre!

About MacEwan University's Child Care Centre

We hope your child and family enjoy the time you spend with us. We consider ourselves a community of learners made up of children, families and early childhood educators. We are fortunate to have many others who contribute to our community of learners, including university staff, faculty and students.

Family involvement and communication is important to our work with children. We value the connections between home and the centre. We believe parents know their children best. We provide the best care, development and learning environment for your child when we have an open channel of communication with you.

Licensing and Accreditation

Our centre is licensed and must meet the requirements laid out in the Child Care Licensing Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation. These rules and standards make sure children's health and safety needs are met.

Child and family services authorities employed by Alberta Children and Youth Services regularly inspect regulated child care programs.

If you would like more information about the Child Care Licensing Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation, copies of these regulations can be found at www.qp.alberta.ca or by calling 780-427-4942 (or toll-free in Alberta, at 310-0000).

In addition to meeting the licensing requirements for child care in Alberta, MacEwan University's Child Care Centre is an accredited centre and adheres to the Quality Standards for Early Learning and Care Services established by the Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services. The 10 standards of excellence in child care identify outcomes for children, family, staff and the community; the standards also emphasize the importance of cultivating strong relationships between children and families and they highlight meaningful play as a means to support children's early learning and development. Our centre has successfully met the requirements for accreditation and re-accreditation since 2006.



Policies and Procedures

For detailed information about the policies and procedures of MacEwan University's Child Care Centre, contact the director at 780-497-5195.

Open Door Policy

You are invited to spend as much time in our centre as you would like. This includes spending time in the playroom at drop off and pick up times, dropping in for lunch and visiting anytime throughout the day.

What are the centre's hours?

The centre is open Monday to Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

We encourage you to arrive for pick up by 5:15 p.m. so that we have some time to talk to you about your child's day. It can be both emotionally and physically difficult for children to be in group care for the full 10 hours during which the centre is open. We encourage you to use the centre for approximately eight hours a day. In our experience, attending more than eight hours a day is often too long for children.

Closure Dates

Each September, families will receive a list of closure dates for the year. Reminders are posted in the centre.

The centre is closed for

- statutory holidays
- two professional development days each year
- the period between Christmas and New Year's (MacEwan University closes early on Christmas Eve day and reopens the day after the New Year's Day stat holiday)

The centre also has four early closure days each year, during which the hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

If your child will be absent on any given day, please notify the centre. If your child will arrive earlier or later than usual, notify the centre beforehand so that we are ready to welcome your child.

How do I contact the centre during the day?

Child Care Centre: 780-497-5195

Room direct line: 780-497-5551

Room phone extensions:

Ext 1 – Koala Room

Ext 2 – Tanager Room

Ext 3 – Dolphin Room

How is the university community involved in the centre?

The centre is partnered with a number of educators and educational programs at MacEwan University. We primarily work alongside the Early Learning and Child Care program; however, we also work with the nursing and the speech-language pathologist assistant programs, the library, and with information technology. You will see students and their program supervisors in the centre. Students are never left alone with children and must wear student identification badges at all times.

Faculty from the Early Learning and Child Care program provide mentorship and guidance to the centre's team of early childhood educators. Faculty and students sometimes conduct research projects in the centre. If research will involve direct observations of your child or his or her experiences at the child care centre, you will be asked to provide informed consent. All research projects at MacEwan University are subject to an ethics review. Educators and faculty often give presentations to other professionals as well as community members; pictures and videos of the children are sometimes used in these presentations. A photo release form is included in the parent agreement. You are informed when these presentations or research projects will take place.

Occasionally we have volunteers at the centre. Volunteers are required to have a criminal record check and to sign a confidentiality agreement. Volunteers are supervised and never left alone with children.

Who runs the child care centre?

The centre is governed by MacEwan University's Early Learning and Child Care program and the Faculty of Health and Community Studies. The centre also has an advisory committee that includes the following individuals:

- Director, Child Care Centre
- Program Chair, Early Learning and Child Care
- One early childhood educator from the centre
- One Early Learning and Child Care faculty member
- Two parent representatives
- Two representatives of the Early Learning and Child Care program advisory committee
- One Early Learning and Child Care student

Meetings are held three or four times a year. If you are interested in participating on the committee, please speak to the early childhood educators in your child's room or to the director.



GETTING STARTED

How do I support my child's transition to the centre?

To help with the transition, you are encouraged to visit the centre with your child as often as you can before he or she starts to attend. Each child is different: some children adjust quickly, while others take several weeks to become comfortable. We will do everything we can to make your child's transition to the centre a positive one.

Please drop in or call the director or your child's early childhood educators to see how your child is doing during the day. You are welcome to visit at any time of the day.

It is often a good idea to arrange your schedule so that you spend about 20 minutes to get your child settled each morning.

What should I bring to the centre?

- A 5 x 7-inch family photo
- Seasonal outdoor clothing
- Winter – hat, mittens, ski pants, winter boots
- Spring – heavy splash pants, additional clothing changes, rubber boots
- Summer – sun hat, sunscreen, bug spray
- A blanket and soft comfort toy
- A change of indoor clothing

For children who are not toilet trained, please provide the following:

- Diapers – a minimum of five per day
- Diaper wipes, diaper creams
- Underwear – several changes while toilet training is in progress

We ask that you bring a family picture on the first day your child attends the centre. The picture remains at the centre while your child is with us. Children use these photos for reassurance. The picture also helps introduce your child and family to the other children and families in the room, which helps build a sense of community. We provide a frame for the picture.

Label all items with your child's name so they can be identified easily.

Please speak to an early childhood educator before bringing toys from home.

Does my child need to bring extra clothes?

Yes! Children have lots of time for play both indoors and outdoors at the centre. Play is often messy. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that is easy to wash. Your child may come home with paint or mud on her or his clothes. Please make sure we always have a few changes of clothes; we have a limited supply of extras.

Please ensure your child has appropriate outdoor clothing. We go outside twice every day, except in extreme weather. In the spring, when it is very wet, your child may need more clothes, socks and a couple pairs of splash pants in order to be comfortable and enjoy outdoor play!

Does my child have to be toilet trained?

No. Toilet learning is a significant stage of a child's life. We are thoughtful and respectful when working with families and children during this important period. When a child has demonstrated signs of readiness and the family has communicated that they would like to begin this process, we follow the child's lead. We acknowledge success with praise. Most importantly, we understand that the toilet learning process will vary in length for each child, and the child may stop and restart the process more than once.

If you have any concerns about toilet learning or would like to know more about our approach, please feel free to talk with us – we are here to help!

What are the policies regarding the drop off and pick up of children?

Provincial regulations require you to sign your child in and out at the beginning and end of each day.

Please speak to an early childhood educator and identify whether you are dropping off or picking up in the playroom or outside in the playground. It is important to make sure an early childhood educator is made aware of when your child arrives and leaves. Both drop off and pick up are good times to share and receive information about your child's day.

Regular pick up and drop off times create a predictable routine for your child. It is also helpful for planning, programming and staffing at the child care centre. Please notify the centre about your typical schedule and provide notice when you anticipate some kind of change. This helps us respond better to your child's needs.

What if I need to send someone else to pick up my child?

You must inform us ahead of time if someone else will pick up your child. Do not give this person the child care centre door code – instead, ask them to ring the doorbell upon arrival.

When an alternative pick up person arrives at the centre, an early childhood educator will ask him or her for identification. In the event that an alternative pick up person arrives and the early childhood educators are not aware that someone different is picking up your child, we will not release the child to this person until we have received verbal confirmation directly from you. If we cannot contact you, we will not release your child to this person.

What happens if no one arrives to pick up my child?

It is imperative that you arrive on time to pick up your child. The centre cannot operate effectively if families are consistently late when picking up children.

If no one arrives to pick up your child and we cannot reach you, our next step is to call your emergency contact person. If that person is not available, we call the Government of Alberta's Emergency Child and Family Services. We are not permitted to drive children or supervise children after hours.

Where do I park?

The parking stalls reserved for child care pick up and drop off are located off 104 Avenue, in front of the 107 Street building. These spaces are reserved for a maximum of 20 minutes. Please be aware of the time limit so that all families have the opportunity to use these parking spots. The spaces are monitored by Parking Services and cars may be ticketed. Your family may have up to three parking passes to carry in different vehicles.

Please return your parking passes when your child no longer attends the centre.

What is the code for the door?

The child care centre door has a code for entry into the centre. When your child begins to attend, the centre provides you with this code. Do not share this code. If someone else is picking up your child, please ask her or him to ring the bell.

Library for parents' use

We have a small library for parents' use in front of the director's office. If you would like to borrow a book, please fill out the sign out sheet posted on the bulletin board. If there is information you need and cannot find in the library, please ask us and we will do our best to find resources.

Family events

The centre has a few family events each year. Some events involve the whole centre, and others occur within an individual room. Watch the centre newsletter and the room communication boards for details. We welcome your involvement in planning these events.

Observation rooms

Each room has an attached observation room. Students or tours sometimes make use of these rooms. You are welcome to use the rooms at any time.

Communication with families

Early childhood educators try to connect with you at drop off and pick up times. If you would like extra time with one of your child's early childhood educators, please make arrangements in advance. You are also welcome to talk to the director. We also communicate through your child's documentation* and through newsletters.

*** For further information, please refer to the Child Development insert.**



CHILD'S DAILY SCHEDULE

What happens in the mornings?

- Arrival time: children settle into the rooms, have a snack and play.
- Play and early learning, in both our inside and outside environments. Experiences are based on children's interests. Educators observe and participate in children's play and may create small group experiences that build on children's curiosity. We call this "emergent curriculum."

What happens in the afternoons?

- Lunch, rest and quiet time.
- Snack time.
- Play and early learning, in both our inside and outside environments.
- Play, relaxation and winding down from the day in preparation for pick up. Conversations with families.

Please note that the daily schedule of each room will likely be a little different.

Are meals and snacks provided?

The centre offers two snacks, in the morning and afternoon, and lunch.

Snack and meal times are important for building relationships and creating a sense of community. The centre strives to create a comfortable social environment that promotes healthy eating habits. During meal times, children sit in groups with their peers and early childhood educators. Families are welcome to join us for lunch.

Menu choices are made in consultation with a dietician and, or, with resources provided by a dietician. We make adaptations to the menu for children with allergies and food preferences.

We recognize that some children like to have a bottle during naptime. However, in the context of group care, Alberta Children and Youth Services policy prohibits us from serving any beverages to children while they are lying down. If you have concerns, we would be happy to discuss ideas to support you and your child during this time of transition.

Is there a nap and rest time?

Yes, nap and rest time occurs between 12:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. in each classroom. In the toddler room, nap and rest time may be earlier, depending on the children and their schedules. We provide each child with her or his own cot and sheet. Blankets are provided, but your child may choose to bring a blanket from home. All bedding is washed weekly. Children are given books and quiet nap toys to help them with the transition from lunch to rest time. The lights are dimmed and quiet music plays; early childhood educators also read stories and comfort children to help them rest. Children who do not nap may rest on their cots for a while, look at books or play with bed toys; sometimes these children are taken into another area in the centre to do quiet activities.



Will my child go outside every day?

Yes, we typically go outside twice each day. Please make sure your child comes to the centre with clothing for outdoor play. Talk to your child's room staff if you are unsure about what clothing she or he needs.

When the outside temperature is colder than -25°C , we stay inside and arrange other play experiences, such as taking a walk around the university, playing in the university gym or setting up bikes in the hallway. In the summer, we tend not to go out between 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m., when the UV index is at its highest.

Does the centre make use of sunscreen and bug spray?

We ensure sunscreen is applied at least 20 minutes before a child goes outside. It is applied twice a day. We encourage you to bring in your own sunscreen, but we do have some available. If the mosquitoes are bad, we use a low DEET spray. You are asked to sign a consent form that allows us to apply both sunscreen and bug spray.

What guides our curriculum? (Pedagogical Strategies)

We believe in these principles and practices:

- treating each child as a unique individual;
- organizing programming that provides children with opportunities that enable them to grow to their full potential;
- providing a play-based approach to learning that establishes a foundation of early literacy, math and science, and experiences in the fine arts; and
- helping children develop a strong sense of self, group social skills and a sense of wonder in discovering the world around them.

What is the centre's environment like?

The centre's environment is a critical component of our program. The early childhood educators attempt to create environments for play and learning indoors and outdoors that inspire wonder and creativity while maintaining a sense of comfort and calm. You will see many natural materials in the playrooms. Natural materials inspire children to create and problem solve. You will see only limited use of commercial toys in the centre.

How do we plan our curriculum?

Because of the relationship that exists between the centre and the Early Learning and Child Care program faculty, the centre has immediate knowledge of the latest research and professional practices in early learning and child care. We provide a program that reflects best practices.

Children are the focus of the curriculum. Projects and small group explorations are developed and expanded by the early childhood educators based on the interests and curiosity of the children. Projects can last a few days or several months. Early childhood educators facilitate learning by setting up play experiences, asking children questions and encouraging the children's creativity and problem solving skills. We encourage children to be engaged with and excited and curious about their environment.

The early childhood educators seek to build a sense of community within the room and offer children opportunities to explore their roles in the broader community. Children are encouraged to express their ideas and opinions, to solve problems and to build relationships with their peers and educators. Early childhood educators help children participate in projects and actively explore their environment.



Children are encouraged to express their creativity in many ways. The rooms have many materials with which children can create projects and express themselves. Children are encouraged to express themselves through art, drama, music and movement. Literacy, numeracy and science are all built into our classroom environments and group projects.

How are field experiences planned?

Field experiences provide opportunities to develop and expand children's interests. They are planned after observation of children's interests and project work. Field experiences often include walks around the university; if the children will leave university premises, you are asked to sign a permission slip.

When we go on a field experience – whether on campus or off – we take a list of the children's emergency information and contact numbers. Educators also take first aid kits and EpiPens on all outings. Children wear MacEwan University child care centre identification badges.

What are student workshops?

One of the most exciting parts of our programming for the children is their participation in student workshops. University students in the Early Learning and Child Care program and the speech-language pathologist assistant program create these programs. In the fall and spring, children are invited to participate in exciting play experiences set up by the MacEwan University students across the hallway from the centre. Notice is given to you about these workshops. Children really begin to look forward to the workshops. Parents are welcome to attend with their children.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

What information do I receive about my child's development?

Early childhood educators connect with you on a regular basis to discuss your child. We create a portfolio for each child that includes a collection of pictures, learning stories, documentation and items your child has created. The portfolio celebrates your child's learning and development over a period of time.

Due to the social nature of children's play, your child's portfolio may include photos of him or her with peers, and your child's image may also be included in another child's portfolio. We make every effort to protect and respect the privacy of children and families. Photographs are developed onsite and kept in secure storage. Images may be used for educational purposes or professional conferences for up to two years after your child's withdrawal from the centre.

If we have any concerns about your child's development we talk with you. We may ask you questions about what you do at home so that we can incorporate these ideas at the centre. We provide support and information and may also suggest referrals to other professionals.

A speech therapist is in our centre on a regular basis. If we have any concerns about your child's speech and language, we ask if you would like support from the speech therapist or if you would like a referral for further assessment. The speech therapist gives the early childhood educators general suggestions for all children.



Documentation of development and learning

During the day, students and educators capture children involved in play through the use of digital cameras, audio recording and video cameras. The centre displays these images and stories on panels in the hallways and playrooms of the centre. These serve as a visual archive of your child's experiences at the centre and provide an important opportunity for students, faculty and early childhood educators to re-visit and reflect upon play. This helps us investigate children's interests in greater depth, understand individual children's development and learning, and connect theory to practice. We use this documentation when planning your child's program and environment, and as a record of their learning and growth.

Documentation collected about each child is used in the following contexts:

- in the playroom and for educational purposes in the university programs just mentioned
- outside the centre and in off-campus settings (e.g., open houses, conference presentations)
- to fill in your child's learning portfolio
- for guidance when planning in the playroom

Much of the documentation is collected by the early childhood educators, but you will also see the beginning work of students learning this important professional practice. We hope you are able to spend time enjoying the documentation with your child.

Do you support children with special needs?

Our centre welcomes all children, including those with varied abilities. We recognize that some children have unique support needs. These support needs may be required due to a physical or cognitive disability, a behaviour or sensory challenge, or other challenges in a child's life. Our centre works in partnership with a variety of professionals from the community. These professionals may come from Alberta Health Services, MacEwan University faculty, Community Options, Child and Family Mental Health Services, the Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) program, private consultants and other professionals as required.

If a child has a support need that is behavioural in nature, we strategize with the child and family to support that child. We do not separate children from a child who is having behaviour challenges. The centre believes that children benefit from these situations by learning many important life skills, including these:

- problem solving skills that are helpful if confronted with bullying or other difficult situations later in life
- acceptance of all people in the community, regardless of differences in race, religion, culture or ability
- compassion and empathy for others
- creating strategies to help community members who may be having a difficult time



Research shows that children without disabilities benefit as much as the child with disabilities when all children are included equally in the community and school.

In our centre, we refer to children with disabilities or other challenges as children with special rights.

What if I think my child needs extra support?

Please talk to us. We work with you to get the support your child needs. We may approach you if we feel your child could benefit from some extra support.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Illness spreads through a child care facility very quickly. It is important that we adhere closely to regulations and recommendations from Child Care Licensing and Alberta Health Services.

What happens if my child is sick?

According to child care licensing regulations, children cannot attend child care when the child

- is vomiting, has a fever, diarrhea, or a new, unexplained rash or cough;
- requires greater attention than can be provided without compromising the care of other children in the program; or
- displays any other illness or symptom the early childhood educator knows or believes may indicate the child poses a health risk to other children, caregivers or staff.

We call you to pick up your child if we notice any of the symptoms identified above. We understand that it is sometimes difficult for you to get away from work or school when we call. We keep your child as comfortable as possible until you arrive.

Licensing regulations require that we post notification of any confirmed cases of communicable disease found at the centre. The centre never posts or communicates the names of affected children. We must report any communicable diseases to Alberta Health Services.

We clean toys and equipment frequently to help minimize the spread of infection.



Will you give my child medication?

When children require medication while at the centre, we will ask you to fill out a consent form that permits us to give your child necessary prescription medication. All prescriptions must have the original label attached, with your child's name and directions about how and when to administer the medication. All medications, including EpiPens and asthma inhalers, are kept in a locked cupboard.

Will the centre administer over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies?

We only administer over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies if they are accompanied by a letter of authorization written by a medical practitioner recognized in the province of Alberta. This letter must detail the same information that would be found on a prescription label: the child's first and last name, the name of the medication, the amount to be administered and when, and the expiry date and duration of treatment. For further information, please refer to the Over-the-Counter Medications and Children insert.

Please note: If medications given to a child cause side effects, such as drowsiness or upset stomach, it may not be appropriate or safe for your child to be at the centre. Please discuss any concerns you have with the staff at the centre.

What if my child gets hurt at the centre?

If your child gets hurt, a form is filled out. You are given a copy to read and sign at the end of the day and can request an additional copy. If the accident is serious (e.g., a hard bump to the head), we call you immediately. The centre must report any critical incident or accident to licensing. If you have further questions about incident response procedures, please ask us.

Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse

The centre is required by law to report suspected or disclosed abuse directly to the Government of Alberta's Children and Youth Services.

OUTDOOR PLAY



At the centre, we believe playing outdoors every day and in all kinds of weather helps children create the habits they need in order to lead a healthy, active life. We also believe outdoor play fosters an attitude of care for the environment. We intentionally designed our playground to naturalize the environment because we are aware of the importance of connecting children with nature and natural environments at an early age.

What Are the Benefits of Outdoor Play for my Child?

By Jane Hewes, PhD., Chair, Early Learning and Child Care.
MacEwan University Demonstration Child Care Centre Newsletter,
Winter 2011.

"The delights of the outdoors are among the deepest, most passionate joys of childhood."

– Mary Rivkin,
The Great Outdoors: Restoring Children's Right to Play Outside

Children love to play outdoors. The outdoors is where children get to be children. They have a kind of freedom outdoors that we cannot give them inside. They can run and jump and shout. The outdoors absorbs the noise and mess of children's normal active play. Adults do not have to control children's natural boisterousness outdoors. Children can be in control and, interestingly, the experience of being in control is what helps children to develop self-control. Self-control is one of the most important and least understood aspects of school readiness.

We believe that playing outdoors every day in all kinds of weather helps children create the habits they will need [in order] to lead a healthy, active life. We think it is also important in fostering an attitude of care for the environment. We made an intentional effort in our playground design to naturalize the environment, partly because we are aware of the importance of connecting children with nature and natural environments at an early age.

What are the benefits of active outdoor play in natural environments?

- Outdoor play reduces stress. Contact with nature improves the stress response systems in the brain. It frees the mind, the body and the spirit, all at once.
- Being outdoors is calming and soothing for children. This feeling of peacefulness strengthens emotional resilience, which in turn contributes to greater emotional self-control.
- Being outdoors reduces restlessness in children and increases concentration, focus, and attentiveness.
- Children who play outdoors regularly do not get sick as often as children who spend more time inside. Being outdoors builds physical resilience and stamina.
- The sensory environment outdoors feeds children's growing brains. It engages all of the senses. Leaves flutter and rustle, birds sing, the snow crunches, the sun feels warm, the wind tickles. We know that young children, especially toddlers, need rich, diverse sensory environments for play. We bring natural materials indoors as much as possible, but there's nothing like being outside.
- Children are more active outdoors. Natural landscapes offer important opportunities for physical development. Walking up and down a small slope builds balance in toddlers. The uneven surfaces of the rocks and pathways in our playground invite preschoolers to develop strength and balance and coordination.
- There are incredible learning opportunities outside. The outdoors invites exploration and discovery – bugs move, the wind makes the leaves flutter, birds build nests, rain makes puddles, snow is building material for forts.

For further reading:

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder. Richard Louv. (2005). New York, NY: Algonquin Books 2005.