



Early Learning and Care  
For Every Child

## Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre A Toronto First Duty Site

The Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) is a prototype that furthers the integration process combining child care, education and family supports while continuing to inform the implementation of community schools and child and family centres as described in *With Our Best Future in Mind: the report to the Premier from the special advisor on early learning*. The core partners include the Toronto District School Board, the City of Toronto, the *Atkinson Charitable Foundation* and WoodGreen Community Services. Research and evaluation continue through the Atkinson Centre and the Institute of Child Study at OISE/University of Toronto.

The Toronto First Duty model is built on the best knowledge in child care, family support and education, recognizing mounting scientific evidence that young children are active learners, and that purposeful play-based experiences and environments have a positive impact on later learning, behavior and well-being.

Central to the vision of Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre is the premise that **families are the first and most powerful influence on children's learning and development**. BWELC welcomes families as partners in the early learning programs and the school, creating a place that is owned by families as much as it is by teachers. Respect for diversity and differences in family make-up, culture, values and practice are embedded in the knowledge that strong relationships with parents benefit young children.

Collaborative teams of educators make a professional commitment to work together with common approaches and goals to meet the needs of the children and their families where **learning is embedded in the environment**. The early years team is inclusive of all educators at Bruce School including teachers, early childhood educators, resource teachers, family support staff, and administrators with a variety of educational backgrounds and expertise. Staff roles are blended, as all educators are valued and respected as equal partners with similar responsibilities and expectations. **Shared professional development** and reciprocal mentoring is key to the success of the team and is encouraged and supported through joint training and supervision.

The children benefit from the blending of pedagogy and expectations provided in a team. The early years team respects that children's development proceeds in a predictable sequence while each child's individual development varies. The team has access to joint planning time to combine their knowledge of child development with observations to plan their program based on the children's interest within the framework of emergent curriculum. The seamless access to programs, parent participation, the learning environment, the integrated staff team and governance, are guided by a steering committee comprised of Toronto First Duty partners.

Fundamental to the success of the program is a unified management team who sees the value of joint planning and equal treatment of all staff, allowing for joint prep. and planning time between ECE's and teachers. **The desire to work in a collaborative, equal relationship** whereby the teachers and ECEs see the other person's training and skills as valuable assets is vital. This allows for all staff to **jointly run the classroom and equally share responsibilities** whether it is whole group or room maintenance. For example, in the BWELC program every other week the staff trade off circle time with room opening and closing duties (i.e. cleaning tables, paints, etc.). All prep. and planning time is joint and focused on program planning and room prep/maintenance **as a team**.