

**In the Early Years Community...**



The well-being of children and families is at the centre of policy and planning, both in the broader community and with system partners.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Policies are designed in the best interests of children, and families are confident in the early years system.



Early Years Engage

Continuous quality improvement in Waterloo Region

# Our Vision for Quality in Waterloo Region

**Quality** is a shared responsibility and supported through a system of relationships: the relationships between educators, children and their parents, among professionals within organizations, between the system and its service providing partners, and throughout the community.

The following statements describe the Region of Waterloo's vision for a high quality early years system using the Eight Elements of Quality as the framework.

**In the Early Years Community...**



Public dollars are directed to fund high quality programs and increasingly support early years programs that are accessible for all families. Early Years programs are adequately resourced. Early Years programs demonstrate viability through fiscal accountability and sound business practices.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Children and families are able to choose early years programs and services that are consistently high quality, inclusive and accessible to them.

**In the Early Years Community...**



Early Years professionals are qualified for their position, compensated fairly, respected in the community and workplace. They contribute leadership and expertise, and engage in reflective practice and life-long learning. All professionals understand the importance of their role in making person-to-person connections to support positive relationships.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

The relationships between children, families and professionals within the Early Years system are reciprocal. Each is recognised for their expertise, knowledge and they support one another in their respective roles. Children and families gain a strong sense of confidence and belonging when system partners provide positive work environments and opportunities for leadership.

**In the Early Years Community...**



Early Years (EY) experiences are coherent with current pedagogy, and informed by current research on child health, development and learning.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

The lived experiences of children and families are coherent with current pedagogy and system values. They are welcomed and respected for their culture, diversity, and supported in seamless transitions to other services.

**In the Early Years Community...**



A climate is provided for early years experiences that foster relationships, belonging, and well-being among children, families and educators. Environments are designed, maintained and equipped to provoke curiosity, exploration, inquiry, and support self-regulation through play. Overall, environments reflect respect for children as capable and competent.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Children have a right to experience meaningful, active, creative, exploratory play, both indoors and outdoors. Environments are intentionally planned, appropriately equipped for children's development, and support their health and well-being. Early Years system partners make person-to-person connections with parents/primary caregivers. Strong connections build trusting, respectful relationships with children, families and professionals.

**In the Early Years Community...**



System partners have well-designed governance structures and clear lines of accountability.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Children and families are engaged in the community in meaningful ways and feel a sense of belonging. Families know they can share ideas, concerns, ask questions, and will be responded to respectfully. Children and families have access to meaningful relationships in neighbourhood programs. System partners are responsive to their needs.

**In the Early Years Community...**



System managers and system partners gather, utilize, share, and link data to guide planning and continuous quality improvement. This information contributes to the growing body of early childhood research.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Children and families benefit from Early Years programs that engage in a cycle of continuous quality improvement and monitoring. Children and families contribute thoughts and ideas that inform both program and system planning. Children's learning and development is made visible and celebrated through portfolios and documentation. Families have access to information that is meaningful to them, both to engage with their child and at the system level, inform decision making and for learning.

**In the Early Years Community...**



Early Years programs are purpose built or purposely designed, co-located or connected to other services within neighbourhoods. Common, system-wide processes exist.

**Children and Families in an Early Years Community...**

Families can easily identify and locate system partner locations. Families understand these locations are places to go for early years programs and services.

# Eight Elements of Quality



(Source: Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, (2005). Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system. Childcare Resource and Research Unit.)

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Coherence</b>	A lived experience, i.e. Our Vision for Quality in Waterloo Region is felt and experienced by children, families and System Partners.
<b>Educators</b>	Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) and others who are employed to work directly with groups of children.
<b>Physical Environments</b>	<b>* Note:</b> For Our Vision for Quality in Waterloo Region the definition of Physical Environments has been broadened. The environment is the context in which learning takes place and is the setting for positive, responsive relationships for children and their families. It encompasses the physical space both indoors and outdoors, the furnishings and materials, organization of time (schedules), as well as the social-emotional climate and “ways of being” (Ministry of Education, 2014).
<b>Pedagogy</b>	Pedagogy is the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that support that understanding of learning. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2007). “How Does Learning Happen?” is Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years. Ontario Regulation 137/15 of the Child Care and Early Years Act includes requirements related to “How Does Learning Happen?” Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years.
<b>Professionals</b>	All employees of Early Years System Partners.
<b>System Manager</b>	At the municipal level, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB) act as system managers to plan and deliver community-based early years programs and services governed and funded by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2013).
<b>System Partners</b>	Organizations that have service agreements with the municipality to provide early years services.