

Martin-Luther-Kindergarten Ottawa

579 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1Y 4K1
(613)-236-1570

kindergarten@glco.org

www.glco.org

Parent Handbook 2017-18



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Program Statement

The preschool program of the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten Ottawa is licensed under the Ontario Ministry of Education and provides care of preschool children ages 30 months to 5 years. At the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten Ottawa, we offer a high quality early learning setting, where children, their families, and the educators make a community.

Our preschool program follows the rules and regulations as developed and described in the Ontario Ministry of Education's framework. We base our pedagogy and curriculum on the following studies:

- How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014.
- Think Feel Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children, 2013.
- Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT), 2007.

The Martin Luther Kindergarten is part of the German Evangelical Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc. We are inclusive and do not teach particular religious convictions. Although, opportunities are given to participate in activities related to the church year and family services at the German Martin Luther Church (e.g. at Easter, annual Open Air Service, Thanksgiving, St. Martin's Day, and Christmas). During our program, children listen to age-appropriate biblical stories and start snack-time by saying grace.

We wish to make it possible for children to develop basic German-speaking skills in a friendly and playful environment, developing language ability by daily practice. The ability to speak German is **NOT** a prerequisite for children (and parents) in order to be admitted to our kindergarten. A basic understanding of the language, however, greatly influences learning outcomes and creates a sense of belonging for the child.

Given the age range and the small group of children, each child finds an excellent opportunity for the acquisition of social skills, developing unselfish behaviour and courtesy while learning from and with their peers.

With our program, children will be appropriately prepared to enter the Canadian school system.

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Children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential

Our pedagogy and practice reflect the province's view of children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. They have an opportunity to try new things, explore new ideas and develop their creativity in our program. We provide them with a safe and caring environment where they can grow and develop to their maximum potential.

To ensure optimal learning and development, our goals for children, consistent with the Ontario Ministry of Education's pedagogy, include the following:



- Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes as part of a group, a community, the natural world.
- Every child is developing a sense of well-being. It incorporates capacities such as self-care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills.
- Every child is an engaged learner who explores the world with his or her natural curiosity and exuberance.
- Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways.

The aim of the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten program is to provide a strong foundation from which students can grow into lifelong learning. By participating in the Kindergarten Program children will:

- Develop confidence in themselves and their ability to learn.
- Demonstrate curiosity and the ability to focus their attention.
- Acquire a level of communicative competence that is personally satisfying.
- Remain true to their individual natures, being free to develop their own potentials.
- Acquire social skills and abilities which enable them to relate to other children and to adults.
- Develop their German language skills.
- Get involved and connected to traditional and religious activities/festivities within the German speaking culture.

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Creating Contexts for Learning through Exploration, Play, and Inquiry

We create contexts that engage children by:

- Designing indoor and outdoor environments and experiences that spark curiosity, invite investigation, and provide challenges that are responsive to individual capabilities to help children extend the boundaries of their learning.
- Connecting with families and communities and inviting their participation to ensure that environments and experiences reflect and are relevant to children's everyday lives.
- Providing a wide variety of interesting objects and open-ended materials for children to explore with their senses, manipulate, and investigate.
- Planning daily routines with limited interruptions and transitions to maintain a sense of and providing ample opportunities through large blocks of time for older children to engage in sustained, complex play and inquiry; participating with children as a coinvestigator, co-learner, and co-planner rather than as director or "keeper of knowledge" and "keeper of the plans" in a way that is separate and apart from the children.
- Continuously questioning and testing their own theories and strategies and seeking new ideas to facilitate children's exploration and understanding of the world around them in meaningful ways.
- Working with families and community partners to ensure that environments and experiences provide equal learning experiences for all children.
- Ensuring that the spaces and experiences provided promote play and inquiry that will help children discover and develop an increasing awareness and understanding of key concepts, including those associated with literacy and numeracy development.
- Documenting and making children's thinking, learning, and competence visible to children, families, and others.

Providing child-initiated and adult-supported experiences

We provide the child-initiated and adult-supported learning by:

- Organising the physical environment so children have access to a wide range of interesting open-ended resources to explore and investigate imaginatively.
- Developing an emotional environment where children feel safe to share their thoughts and ideas and try things out without being afraid that they might get things wrong.

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- Managing the routine of the day to make sure that children have time to follow their own ideas and develop their self-initiated play.
- Teaching children the practical skills they need to handle tools and equipment safely.
- Helping children to develop the social skills and dispositions they need to cooperate with others and work as part of a team.
- Observing and documenting children's learning and using this information to plan what sort of opportunities and experiences to offer children next to deepen their understanding.

Health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children

Health and safety

The Martin-Luther-Kindergarten is a nut-free environment and consequently enforces a nut-free policy. Snacks that contain or may contain nuts are prohibited.

All immunization information **MUST** be received prior to the child being admitted into the program (photocopy of the immunization card).

Health regulations state that parents not send their child to kindergarten if the child has had one of the following within the last 48 hours:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhoea.

Teachers observe the children as they arrive for signs of illness. If a child appears ill, kindergarten teachers will call the parents to pick up the child immediately. Please report to the supervisor all communicable diseases (e.g. chicken pox, head lice, conjunctivitis, impetigo) or if a child has experienced vomiting or diarrhoea.

No medication or drugs will be administered or kept at the school. The only exception to this policy is for life-threatening allergies, i.e. Epi-pens that is supplied by the parents. A doctor's letter and the anaphylactic information sheet with a recent photograph of the child are required for the teacher to administer this medication.

Teachers may administer or apply a non-prescription medication to a child, for example, in a first-aid situation or sunscreen application. Only non-prescription medication containing a Drug Identification Number (DIN) may be administered or applied.

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Nutrition

Based on Canada's Food Guide, healthy, nut-free snacks are provided by parents.

Well-Being

We support children's well-being by:

- Establishing positive, authentic, and caring relationships with families and providing a safe, non-judgemental environment for shared learning.
- Providing inclusive learning environments and experiences that encourage exploration, play, and inquiry.
- Respecting and finding ways to support each child's varied physiological and biological rhythms and needs for active play, rest, and quiet time.
- Providing regular daily opportunities (responsive to individual capabilities), like indoor and outdoor play, for children to be physically active and explore the world around them with their bodies, minds, and senses.
- Limiting activities where children are sedentary for an extended period of time;
- Creating safe and stimulating outdoor spaces for intentional active play that is individualized and adapted as needed to support children's varied abilities, offering challenges that are within each child's ability to master;
- Facilitating children's efforts to take reasonable risks, test their limits, and gain increasing competence and a sense of mastery through active play and social interactions;
- Developing program adaptations and physical accommodations that allow every child to participate and be challenged in meaningful ways.
- Providing a safe environment that supports children's growing independence and capacity for self-care.
- Supporting self-regulation by being responsive and attuned to children's individual cues, arousal states, and responses to various stressors.

Relations among the children, parents, and staff

Positive and supportive relationship between children, parents and educators are fundamental.

Educators connect with children by being available, sensitive, responsive and caring. They take cues from children, reinforce pro-social skills and demonstrate positive role-

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modeling. This is the way they build trust, making children feel safe and secure. From this platform, relationships are made so that children discover, take risks, grow and learn.

Educators actively participate in children's play experiences through observing and documenting the milestones in their life to ensure age-appropriate development.

Educators support parents in their roles. Families are welcome at all times. We also provide annually opportunities for family involvement through field trips, information sessions, and ongoing written and face-to-face communications.

The Martin Luther Kindergarten is committed to working collaboratively with all of our community partners as we work together on the mutual goal of providing the best possible child care service to families.

Our community partners are:

- The Martin-Luther-Community Ottawa
- The Saint-Albertus-Community Ottawa
- Senior Club "Frohe Runde" at the Saint-Albertus-Community Ottawa
- German Language School Ottawa
- "Spielgruppe" at the Martin-Luther-Community Ottawa
- The Austrian Canadian Council
- Maple Leaf Almrausch Club

Positive self-expression and communication and self-regulation

The Martin Luther Kindergarten inclusive programming leads to children sense of belonging. Positive learning environments and experiences, focused on active play based learning, encourage children's communication, self expression and self regulation by:

- Recognizing each child as having equal rights to participate in program activities, trips and events.
- Recognizing and respecting the unique qualities of each child and family, including ancestry, culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, family environment, and developmental abilities and needs.
- Creating strategies that value the culture and first language of all children.
- Establishing programming strategies to foster an inclusive learning environment in which every child can participate.

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- Viewing the diversity of children and families as an asset, and plan programs to reflect differences and enrich the environment.

Our programs focus on active play-based learning as the way that children naturally learn best. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. Play is responsive to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on his or her innate curiosity and creativity.

Our program also supports children's self-regulation, the to deal effectively with stressors and then recover. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to modulate their emotions, pay attention, ignore distractions, inhibit impulses, assess the consequences of their actions, and understand what others are thinking and feeling.

We support children's self-regulation by:

- Providing environments that reduce stressors while recognizing and supporting children's efforts and increasing ability to self regulate.
- Being responsive and attuned to children's individual cues, arousal states, and responses to various stressors.
- Providing strategies for becoming or staying calm and focused by enabling them to recognize and modulate their emotional states and impulses and become more aware of the effects of their actions on others.

Prohibited Practices

Young children benefit from an affirming approach that encourages positive interactions with other children and with adults, rather than from a negative or punitive approach intended to manage unwanted behavior.

Research from diverse fields of study show that children who attend programs where they experience warm, supportive relationships are happier, less anxious and more motivated to learn than those who do not. Experiencing positive relationships in early childhood also has significant long term impact on physical and mental health, and success in school and beyond.

The Martin Luther Kindergarten Program Statement sets out approaches that support positive interactions between children, families, staff and the community.

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The following prohibited practices are not permitted:

- Corporal punishment.
- Deliberately use of harsh or degrading measures on a child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect.
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, bedding.
- Locking the exits of a centre or using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child when separating them from other children.
- Any form of abuse - physical, sexual, emotional and/or neglect.

Program Curriculum

The Program Curriculum is based on experiences, activities, and events that occur within our inclusive environment and is designed to foster children's well-being, learning, and development and ensure meaningful participation for every child. It begins with understanding of what children are capable of learning and how they learn effectively. It sets out goals for children's learning and development, health, and well-being.

Programs to be followed during the school year include music, arts, crafts, reading, development of recognition of numbers and the alphabet, as well as teaching of coordinated movement. There is also creative play, projects, cooperative work in small and large groups, festivities and celebrations. The room is set up to include stations for building block activities, puppet shows, a reading corner, etc. to allow concurrent activities in the one class area. The program also includes daily opportunities for active outdoor play and rest time for children who require it, based on their developmental needs. Parents are welcome to assist at any time.

The program has a set weekly schedule, which serves as a guideline for our activities. Flexibility is key component of the program and any new learning opportunities that arise are readily incorporated into the curriculum.

Programs can be adjusted so that every child can fully participate. The activities are developmentally appropriate for each of the different age groups and include both child-directed and teacher-directed activities. During free play times, children choose their own activities from any area. Teacher-directed (structured) activities include letter and number recognition, singing, instruments, finger play, stories and games. Variations of the schedule (field trips etc.) are possible and kept on the daily attendance record.

At the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten, we understand that pedagogical documentation is a way for our program staff to observe how children think and learn.

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Our staff make daily observations of children in the program and use this information to help plan their future. Our intention is to move beyond reporting of children's behaviour, in order to find meaning in what children do and experience.

Language

During the daily activities children are immersed in the German Language. Administration and written communication between parents, educators and directors is in English language.

For children growing up in a German-speaking environment, this policy makes it possible to use and improve their language skills in the kindergarten program. Children who do not speak German when entering the kindergarten are provided with a solid foundation for the acquisition of the German language in an early stage of childhood.

Parents of children who are exclusively English speaking at home should not expect any "language miracles". It has been proven that children who attend a kindergarten program in another language acquire an excellent listening understanding. Just attending a kindergarten program, however, is insufficient in order to enable a child to permanently and actively speak a second language. In fact, the home environment is decisive in achieving active language skills. A kindergarten program in another language will, nonetheless, provide a firm foundation for further studies in this language. Children will then easily acquire reading and writing skills as well as an active vocabulary.

Staff

Our educators are fluent in both German and English. They are engaged in continuous learning, exploring new ideas and adjusting practices to achieve the best outcomes for children, families, and continuous professional development supported by the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten.

Our Educators:

- Use a warm, responsive, and inclusive approach.
- Build positive relationships with children, families, colleagues, and communities.
- Establish a supportive social environment that supports autonomy and self-esteem.
- Are involved play partners.

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- Foster, observe and document significant behaviour/developmental milestones.
- Establish a supportive environment that supports children's learning, development, health, and well-being.

Continuous Professional Learning for Staff

The Martin Luther Kindergarten is committed to the ongoing professional development of all the employees. The Kindergarten encourages staff to regularly participate in professional courses, workshops, training and conferences.

On a day-to-day basis, the supervisor and the educators regularly meet to discuss and reflect on strategies or particular areas of the curriculum. The Kindergarten staff use materials like links, articles, and various readings related to supplement their professional learning.

Board of Directors

The Preschool Board of Directors currently consists of German speaking members and the pastor of the German Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc.

Our Board of Directors provides oversight and direction in the fulfillment of the preschool's mission to ensure its long-term success and sustainability.

Members of the Martin-Luther Church of Ottawa Inc. and other volunteers initiated and founded the Martin-Luther-Preschool in 2006. Policy, budget and hiring of staff are the sole responsibility of the Board of Directors which is supervised by the German Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc.

The preschool treasurer is chosen by the preschool Board of Directors and is under its supervision.

The pedagogical program and the daily operation of the kindergarten is the responsibility of the supervising ECE-teacher in cooperation with the Board of Directors.

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Welcome to the Kindergarten

We are in a cheerful, friendly and well-lit premise at St. Stephen`s Church on Parkdale Avenue. These include a big hall, which can readily serve as space for indoor games, rhythm and musical exercise. In addition, we have an adjacent fenced playground where children play on a daily basis.

Schedule

From September to June, the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten offers a daily program (closing days according to the OCDSB) from 8:30am to 1:00pm, Monday to Friday.

The normal daily schedule is as follows:

8:30-10:00 Free play; child-initiated, adult guided activities; arts and crafts

10:00-10:30 First circle with special themes

10:30-11:00 Snack time (***a healthy, nut-free snack provided by the parents***)

11:00-11:30 Quiet time (reading, writing, puzzles)

11:30-12:00 Second circle with special themes, games, songs, music

12:00- 1:00 Rhythm, movement, gymnastic, outdoor time (playground, park)

Closures and Holidays

The Kindergarten follows the schedule of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board and its holidays. The Kindergarten is closed on the following days: Thanksgiving, Ottawa-Carleton District Board of Education Christmas Break and March Break, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday and Victoria Day.

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Monthly Fee

The monthly fee for full-time attendance is \$ 610.00.

Depending on space available part-time registration is possible.

(4 days- \$ 520.00, 3 days- \$ 400.00).

Admission

Children must be 30 months old. The teacher/child ratio is 1:8. Currently there is a maximum of 16 children in the kindergarten per day.

Registration

Registration starts on March 1st on "first come, first serve" basis. Pre- registration is available to current and previous parents in the program. A 50.00 \$ non-refundable registration fee must accompany the registration form. In addition, a cheque post-dated to July 1st of the current year must be submitted at the time of registration, covering the total individual fee for September (payable to "Martin Luther Kindergarten"). In case of withdrawal from the program after July 1st, the fee for September can only be refunded if the space can be otherwise filled. On the first day of kindergarten in September, post-dated cheques (payable to "Martin Luther Kindergarten") for the remaining school year (October through June) must be submitted to the kindergarten (redeemable on the 1st of each month).

The Regional Health Department requires that all children enrolled in the program must have proof of up-to-date immunization.

The children are gradually integrated into the program as they enrol. Space permitting, enrolment is possible at any time throughout the year.

The Board of Directors reserves the right to cancel the program due to insufficient enrolment. In addition, changes to admission to the program are at the discretion of the Board.

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Refunds & Tax receipts

No refunds will be given for holidays, scheduled closures, illness or if the Martin Luther Kindergarten is closed due to unforeseen circumstances such as utility failure or a severe storm. In the event of an extended absence from the program, the Martin Luther Kindergarten cannot offer a rebate or reduction in fees.

There will be a \$15.00 fee for NSF cheques, payable in cash within a week's notice. Tax receipts for paid fees are available upon request.

Withdrawals

The Board must receive one month's advance written notice of withdrawal from the program. This notice must be received by the Board no later than the first day of the month before the month of withdrawal whereupon the remaining post-dated cheques will be returned. If one month's notice (as of the first of the month) is not given, one month's cheque will be withheld and the remaining cheques will be returned. Cheques will not be returned for withdrawals requested after April 30th.

The Board will not consider withdrawals and re-registrations within the same kindergarten year. Once a child is withdrawn, he/she is withdrawn for the remainder of the kindergarten year. Special circumstances can be discussed with the Board. Extended holidays are not considered special circumstances.

The Board of Directors, upon recommendation of the Supervisor, reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child from the program due to behavioural problems. A parent has the right to appeal this decision and must request, in writing, a meeting with the Board of Directors and the teaching staff.

The first day- Introducing your child to the program

This may be your child's first experience in a group setting on their own.

Children react differently to separating from their parent and/or caregiver. Our goal is to make your child's entry into the program as comfortable and positive as possible.

The following suggestions may help the transition into the program for both you and your child.

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- Explore the environment together. Allow your child to hold your hand and walk around the room looking at activities. As your child becomes more comfortable, begin to move away. If you station yourself in one area, your child will know where you are and will begin to explore from the secure base you provide.
- If your child would like to participate in an activity, join in if your company is requested by your child.
- Some children prefer to watch other children at play. In this case, sit down with your child and talk quietly about what you are seeing. Please do not pressure the child to join in. Participation will come when your child feels comfortable.
- When your child appears happy and comfortable feel free to leave. Please say goodbye to your child and inform the teacher that you are leaving.
- Sometimes a child will cry for a few minutes after a parent leaves the room. If you are concerned about this, please wait in a nearby area where we can call you if necessary. The kindergarten teachers are aware of and sympathetic to these separation problems and are willing to help and guide you and your child.
- Experience has shown that starting school is less confusing if the children are phased in gradually. Plan to spend some time integrating your child into the program, slowly if necessary. Some children will be fine if you leave after the first visit, others will need more time.

Behaviour and Guidance

The Martin Luther Kindergarten encourages children to play within the following known limits. They are expected to:

- Be friendly with others;
- Use words instead of hands to settle arguments;
- Respect other children`s creations and their personal space;
- Walk indoors;
- Use quieter voices indoors than outdoors;
- Help to tidy up;
- Sit to eat and drink.

The *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, under which the kindergarten is licensed, prohibits corporal punishment or deliberate, harsh or degrading measures which would humiliate or undermine a child`s self-respect.

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Clothing and personal items

Children should wear clothing that is simple, comfortable and washable. They should also have a pair of rubber-soled shoes that can be left at the school and a change of clothes in their backpack.

Please label all of your child's personal items. This includes clothing, shoes, water bottles food containers and lunch boxes.

Drop off and Pick up

Children should not be left at the kindergarten until a staff member has been made aware of their presence. Children must be picked up on time. A child waiting may become anxious or lonely. The teacher cannot release a child to someone other than a parent without parent's permission. Please notify the kindergarten staff if someone other than a parent is to pick up your child.

Fire, Safety and Emergencies

As per fire department regulations, fire drills are conducted with the children on a monthly basis.

In case of an emergency, your child will be taken to the nearest medical facility. Your Signature on the registration form indicates your acceptance of this arrangement.

If it is necessary to evacuate the building due to fire or emergency, the children will be taken to the **St. Albertus Catholic Church, 416 Parkdale Avenue, Phone: 613-722-3992**. Parents will be notified as soon as possible.

Opportunities to Give

Martin-Luther-Kindergarten accepts donations in the form of cheques, credit cards, stocks, bonds, insurance, property, and cash from individuals, corporations, government and foundations. Most gifts are eligible for a charitable donation receipt. For more information, please contact Pastor Friedrich Demke, (pastor.demke@yahoo.ca phone: 613-748-9745).