



## Family Handbook & Policy Manual

Welcome to Sunflower Early Learning Society,

We are located in the beautiful Pemberton Heights neighborhood at 2260 Philip Avenue, North Vancouver. Sunflower Early Learning Society (SELS) is a registered non-profit society, supported by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of dedicated parents. The society is licensed by British Columbia's *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*. All teachers in our preschool are certified and registered Early Childhood Educators or Assistants and all teachers in out of school care are certified as Assistants or Responsible Adults.

At Sunflower, we understand how important it is to find just the right fit for your child and your family. We strive to create a nurturing environment that is safe and fun while maintaining transparency and openness in all communication.

To ensure full understanding of our Society and programming, please take your time in reading through our Family Handbook and Policy Manual. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

We look forward to beginning this journey with you and your family,

Mindy Patterson

Executive Director  
Sunflower Early Learning Society

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### Preschool Readiness

#### **Is Your Child Ready to Start Preschool?**

You think your child is ready to start preschool—they are 3 after all—but you aren't quite certain... Whether to enroll your child in preschool is a big decision but there are some key indicators that can help you to decide if they are ready to take that first step into a classroom. And if you decide they aren't quite ready yet, relax. It is OK to start the following semester or even next year.

#### **How Old Is Your Child?**

For the most part, preschool is defined as the 2 years before a child begins kindergarten. A child is required to be 3 years old by December of the academic year that they join.

#### **Is Your Child Potty Trained?**

We require that children be potty trained upon joining the school, or at least well on their way. We do not have the staff: child ratio or changing facilities to support diaper changes or potty training. Preschoolers should also have some knowledge of self-care, including putting on their shoes and coat, knowing how to zipper up their pants, and washing their hands.

#### **Does Your Child Follow Directions?**

It is expected that your child can follow simple instructions by the time that they are ready to join Preschool. When at Sunflower, the children are asked to clean up, follow snack guidelines and general safe boundaries, walk in safely with the rest of the class as part of transitions and on outings, and other assorted jobs and reasonable expectations.

If you sense this might be problematic, you can start giving your preschooler easy tasks they can do on their own—setting the plates at the dinner table or helping bring the mail in. The job isn't as important as the routine is— pick simple tasks that can be completed on a daily basis.

#### **How Well Does Your Child Transition?**

We have a minimal but set schedule, with space for a certain amount of flexibility—from gathering times to free play time, to hand washing to snack time and tidying up, so if your child is not good at transitioning, this is something you'll need to work on.

Simply by giving your child a little advance notice—the television will be turned off at the next commercial; we will have a snack after we finish colouring this page—will help them to make the switch easily from one activity to the next.



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### **Has Your Child Been Away from You?**

For children that have been in daycare, this is a no-brainer. But for children who have one parent who stays at home with them all day, separating can be an issue. If you've never left your child before, you may want to start practicing before attending preschool.

For short periods of time, leave your child with a trusted friend or family member while you run to the grocery store or go for a quick walk around the block.

### **How Well Does Your Child Interact with Other Children?**

If your child has been around other children—siblings and relatives count—this shouldn't be an issue.

Arranging for playdates, signing up for a group, or even taking classes at a library or community center is good practice for learning how to get along with others.



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**Preschool Program Overview**

So, you have reviewed the questions in *Is Your Child Ready to Start Preschool?* and it seems like an appropriate time for your family to take this step. At Sunflower Preschool, we have 4 different options for programming. You can select the class that best suits your family’s needs. As we are a preschool and creating a predictable routine is an important part of what we do, these class times are set, and it is not possible to mix and match days, or to change your class hours. Under our license we may only provide care for children for up to 4 hours per day, therefore we cannot register families for both a morning and afternoon class.

To be eligible for entry into a 3’s class, your child must be 3 years old on or before December 31 of the year they are joining us. If your child is joining mid-term, they are required to be at least 33 months old.

To be eligible for entry into a 4’s class, your child must be 4 years old on or before December 31 of the year they are joining us. If your child is joining mid-term, they are required to be at least 45 months old.

We require that children be potty trained before attending; under a preschool license, we do not have the facilities nor staffing ratio required to potty train or change diapers. We are aware that accidents happen, so ask that we keep a change of clothing at school. However, if your child has accidents every day they are in school, we do not consider them to be *potty trained*. For more information see <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw170452>.

*Our classes are all named after different types of Sunflower!*

<b>Class Name</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Times</b>	<b>Monthly Fees</b>
Bashful	3 years	Mon, Wed, Fri	9:00 – 12:00 pm	\$350
Sundance 4-day	4 years	Monday-Thursday	9:00 – 1:15pm	\$680
with 4-day Add-on	4 years	Monday-Thursday	1:15 - 2:30pm	\$772
Sundance 5-day	4 years	Monday-Friday	9:00 – 1:15pm	\$850
with 5-day Add-on	4 years	Monday-Friday	1:15 - 2:30pm	\$965



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### Out of School Care Program Overview

Our evolving Before & After School program is operated by qualified staff that hold at least a Responsible Adult (RA) qualification, and that have previous experience working with children and young people.

We are well aware of the need for children in this age range (5-12 years) to have the opportunity for lots of physical activity and outdoor exploration, particularly after a day at school, so our program begins each session with our staff team supervising the children at their school playground (Capilano Elementary) or at another local park, before heading back to our school.

Our school offers a large, safe space including a garden, gym and art studio, for the children to use. We facilitate open ended and child-led play, along with introducing new activities based on the children's interests.

Moving through the session, we provide a healthy snack, and access to creative activities, reading, writing and role-play in our gym and classrooms.

### Drama Program

We offer professional theatre classes every Tuesday. Taught by experienced instructors, these sessions give students hands-on practice in acting and stagecraft. The Drama Club stages two performances each year—one in winter and another in late spring—so families can celebrate their children's progress and creativity. We continually review student feedback and emerging interests to refine and expand the program, ensuring our B&A offerings stay fresh, engaging, and responsive to the needs of our community.

On professional development days and holidays, we offer camps, which are often centered around local field trips and walks, where possible.

The primary goal of our out of school care programs, is to create a stable and welcoming environment for children of mixed ages, backgrounds and abilities, where all that attend can access an abundance of opportunities for movement, exploration and self-discovery. Our educators seek to support children in reaching their full potential by recognizing each stage of development and fashioning an environment designed to nurture and facilitate growth at each stage, in line with the Reggio Emilia belief that the environment is the third teacher. The environment we have created allows children to work towards achieving independence, self discipline, social competence, self-knowledge, enthusiasm for learning, positive attitudes, intellectual growth, and an organized approach to problem-solving.

Our Before & After School Program runs Monday - Friday from 7:30am – 9:00am and from 3:00pm-6:00pm. This includes walking drop off and pick up from Capilano Elementary school.



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**Out of School Care/ Camp Fees 2025-2026  
Before & After School Program**

<b>Morning Only</b>	<b>Afterschool Only</b>	<b>Before and After</b>	<b>Before and After K's</b>
<b>\$241/Month</b>	<b>\$506/Month</b>	<b>\$545/month</b>	<b>\$340/ Month</b>

**Top Up Fees**

<b>Daily top up fees for Winter/Spring + Pro D Day Camp</b>	AM \$61	PM \$51	AM+PM \$41
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**Top Up Fees- Out of School Care**

Top up fees are used to pay for Sunflower Pro D days and camps. It is a discounted rate for students who would attend the day of the week that a camp falls on. For example, if Lucy usually attends the After School Program and a ProD Day camp falls on a Monday, Lucy would pay the PM top up fee.

**SUNFLOWER GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Vision, Mission, Values**

**Vision**

Children reach their full potential within a supported, accessible, and inclusive Reggio Emilia inspired environment.

**Mission**

To foster a community of connection, reflection, growth and well-being for all society members and staff.

**Values**

Community relationships, equal opportunities, and meaningful connections; trust, respect, empathy, and inclusion.

At Sunflower ELS, we also focus on:

**Learning in Relationship**

Along with being inspired by the Reggio Emilia Philosophy, Sunflower ELS aims to cultivate a wide breadth of thought and ideas as a foundation for building meaningful connections and learning



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opportunities. These intentional connections and learning opportunities promote social responsibility, curiosity, and resilience.

### Emergent Curriculum

We aim to evoke and make visible multifaceted perspectives in our school through inquiry, reflection, ongoing projects, curiosity, and conversation.

### Diplomacy

We aim to consistently provide opportunities for every parent, child, and teacher to have a voice that is heard, valued, and represented in our school.

### Organizational Integrity

We commit to transparent and responsible organizational practices that uphold our vision, mission, and values. We live out our philosophy daily, and respect all families, staff, and children.

## **Philosophy**

### Emergent Curriculum

Curriculum is everything that happens during our time together at Sunflower. Our educators are trained in a reflective teaching practice, and we encourage all educators to engage in this reflective practice with each other, our families, and children always. This includes planning the learning environment for exploration and observing the children as they play and interact with each other and the environment. From these observations, educators create customized invitations for children to expand their thinking and understanding and to encounter new challenges or perspectives.

Our collaborative investigations may last an hour, a day, a week or may progress into an ongoing project that spans a longer period. The children's personal experiences and individual inquiries often fuel the learning process in an emergent curriculum, while educators offer provocations and invitations to extend the children's thinking, bringing people together as a collaborative whole as much as possible. An organic learning process such as this really comes in to its own when children are afforded **the opportunity to play for extended periods of time in a carefully curated environment.**

### Reggio Emilia

We are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. An especially important part of this philosophy is that we view children as **competent, capable, and powerful individuals.** The idea of community is also a focus, and we are always looking for new ways to collaborate with, and represent, our school community. We believe that knowledge is constructed through shared experiences and discussions. and Teachers meet every other Friday afternoon to reflect on their practice and our environment together. Parents are a vital component in the Reggio Emilia philosophy; they are viewed as partners, collaborators, and advocates for their children. Educators respect parents as each child's first teacher and value parents' involvement.

### Environment

A welcoming and purposeful environment is another key element of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. We aim to create an environment that feels cared for, considered, warm, and accessible. Our environment is



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flexible and represents our current community. Our environment should promote and make possible learning and inquiry through each child's different learning language.

### Social & Emotional Development

We encourage our educators to model, and nurture in children a sense of self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and positive social identities. We promote social and emotional problem-solving by supporting children in understanding their feelings, and then encouraging them to articulate their findings. We observe, reflect, and ask open-ended questions, allowing children the space to come up with their own ways to 'make amends' where this is appropriate, or to do something differently next time. Relating back to the idea of diplomacy being active within our school, in offering children the opportunity to consider the perspective of others, they can begin to develop skills to advocate for themselves while also being empathetic. We aim to build upon children's innate, budding capacities for empathy and fairness, as well as their cognitive skills for thinking critically about what is happening around them. We work as a community to build a sense of safety, the sense that everyone can and will be treated fairly.

### Image of the Child

We believe that each child is competent and capable of learning the skills necessary to take responsibility for their social interactions and initiative for their own learning. We offer children the time and space to explore and experiment within their own level of knowledge, and to test out their hypothesis in the different ways that work for them. We acknowledge the fact that children's histories, abilities, and interests differ and for this reason we constantly reflect on our practice, environment, and interactions.

### Image of the Family

We see families as experts in their own child's growth and development, and as a crucial partner in their child's education. We commit to providing families with a high-quality preschool led by experienced and passionate educators, and to providing each child with an experience that is joyful, inspiring, and safe. Our hope is that each family comes to feel connected to their child's school experience in their own way. Accordingly, we ask families to share their perspectives and invite open communication with their class team regularly. We welcome family participation and encourage spending time in the classroom and volunteering when possible.

### Image of the Educator

We see Educators not as 'teachers' in a traditional sense, but as 'learning partners', collaborating with the children to make meaning and to understand our world. Documentation is an ongoing process in our school, which serves not only as part of our reflective practice, but also as a way of making learning visible and showing our dedication to the importance of our everyday investigations and interactions. By documenting, we are showing the children that we place value on their experience. Through making learning visible, and consistently reflecting on what is happening in our school, we not only create an open dialogue between educators, families and children, but we also open up the opportunity to really focus in depth on the different types of learning that are happening, and the different hypotheses that are being tested out.



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### Authentic Childhood

We aim to provide children with authentic experiences that enrich their childhood through a sense of freedom, and *awe & wonder*. When we consider that we only live through childhood once, we are inspired to make our children's time at Sunflower as memorable as possible. By providing a safe place to take risks and be independent, to explore loose-parts and other open-ended resources, to connect with nature and play outdoors, we hope to allow children to *truly be children*.

### Inclusion

We believe that all children have a right to quality care and education and provide the same opportunities for every child that attends our program. Inclusion really means *all* children, not just those who are *easy and/ less expensive* to include.

## Registration, Fees & Withdrawal Policy

### Registration Fee + Deposit

A \$50 Registration fee will be charged upon registration of your child at SELS and then will be required annually thereafter for as long as you remain a member in any SELS program. One month of fees is required to be paid upon registration and will be used for your child's first month of care (September).

### Program Fees

Monthly fees are due on the first of each month. Failure to pay fees can result in termination of care. Fees are structured with the whole school year in mind, including those months where we are closed for statutory holidays and professional development days.

We do not offer a reimbursement of any fees for closures that fall on scheduled days, such as statutory holidays, sick days, vacations or other leaves or periods where children do not attend for their full class time, including on days throughout the start of term and gradual entry period in September (or whenever you begin if starting mid-term).

### Out of School Care Part Time Registers

Children will only be able to register for our out of school care programs part time if space permits. Families who register part time at the beginning of the year may be required to increase their enrollment or withdraw if a full time student wishes to enroll in their place.

### Payment Types

We prefer that fees are paid by pre authorized debit and include a PAD Agreement form in our registration package. For all other payments, we accept cheques made payable to 'Sunflower Early Learning Society', cash, or e-transfer to [admin@sunflowerschool.ca](mailto:admin@sunflowerschool.ca). We do not accept card payments currently.

### Tax Receipts



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Receipts for income tax purposes will be provided via email on or before February 28<sup>th</sup> each year, for the previous year's fees. If you have not received your tax receipt by the above date, please get in touch with [director@sunflowerschool.ca](mailto:director@sunflowerschool.ca).

### **Unscheduled Closures**

If Sunflower ELS is not able to operate due to circumstances out of our control, an attempt will be made to operate a full or modified program at an alternate location. There will be no refunds for unscheduled closures that last for two consecutive days or less. Refunds for unscheduled closures, other than outbreaks, discussed below, that continue for three consecutive days or longer will be issued on the parent portion of the fee based on the actual daily rate for the type of registration.

### **Declined/Insufficient Funds/NSF Fees**

A fee of \$45 will be applied if funds are unavailable at the time of pre-authorized debit withdrawal. Sunflower ELS will not be responsible for any costs charged by your bank/financial institution.

### **Government Subsidy**

The B.C government's Affordable Child Care Benefit Program is available to families and is based on certain provincial eligibility requirements. Families who receive the provincial child care subsidy are responsible for paying the difference in costs between the subsidy and Sunflower ELS fees each month.

Parents are responsible for keeping their subsidy current, and for the full fee if their subsidy expires. For more information, contact 1-888-338-6622 or [visit the website](#).

### **Required Forms and Documentation**

Parents and guardians must have completed all forms and required documentation before the child can attend Sunflower. Families with incomplete forms will be unable to attend until they are complete and no refunds will be given for days missed due to incomplete paperwork.

### **Withdrawal or Program Changes**

We staff our programs with numbers of children in mind, therefore a minimum of one calendar month notice is required for withdrawal from your program, or any program change. Notice must be received before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month prior to the month you wish to withdraw your child. An additional month's fee will be charged if the required notice is not given.

### **Withdrawal of Services**

In rare situations, it may be necessary for Sunflower ELS to withdraw services; however, we will make every attempt to work with the family to resolve the issue(s) to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, provided that the arrangement does not compromise the mission and values of the society, put the staff, the child or other participants at risk, or diminish the value of the Sunflower learning experience for other participants.

Situations are dealt with on an individual basis, considering the specific needs of the child/children and circumstances of the family.



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The following situations (not limited to) may be considered cause for terminating care:

- Presentation of behaviours in a child that are physically or mentally harmful to other children in our care, or staff, and/ behaviours as above that are present and not funded for 1-1 support by the family or an outside agency.
- Unresolved custody issues (e.g. if a family's custody issue results in continuous conflicts at the school, and places the staff, the child, or other children at risk).
- Inappropriate conduct of a family member, including harassment, threatening behaviour, violent acts toward staff, children or to other families involved in the program.
- Late pick-up issues.
- Non-payment or consistent late payment of fees.
- Philosophical differences (when the needs and opinions of a family do not fit with the values, policies, and procedures of SELS).
- Knowingly bringing sick children into the school, thereby compromising the health and wellness of the other children, families, and staff.

### Health Policy & Procedure

#### Sick Child Policy

It is important to prevent the spread of any infectious disease or illness to other children and staff. Please keep your child at home if you feel that your child is too unwell to participate in the program. Children whom staff judge to be unwell or have a source of infection will not be allowed to participate in the program. If your child becomes ill during programming and you cannot be reached, staff will phone emergency contacts to pick-up your child promptly, keeping them safe and comfortable in the meantime.

A child is considered sick and will be sent home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- a) Fever and/ temperature over 38°C – your child may return after 24 hours of being fever-free
- b) Diarrhea – your child may return after 24 hours after the last bout of diarrhea
- c) Vomiting - your child may return after 24 hours after the last bout of vomiting
- d) Hacking or a continuous cough
- e) Yellow or green mucus discharge from eyes or nose
- f) Any unidentified rash that is unusual for that child
- g) Sore throat or loss of voice
- h) Parasitic infection including lice
- i) Any serious communicable disease (measles, chickenpox, pinkeye, etc.)

Your child must be symptom-free for a period of at least 24 hours prior to returning to school. It is advisable to seek medical attention to ensure your child is fit to return to Sunflower.

Please do not bring your child to school with any illness that prevents them from being unable to participate in our regular daily activities, even if they have none of the above symptoms. If you need to



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give your child “over-the-counter” medication, that is an indication that they are not well enough to participate and should be kept home.

It is our responsibility to report any communicable disease to Vancouver Coastal Health.

Please see our separate policy in relation to COVID-19 in a separate document, and on our website [www.sunflowerschool.ca](http://www.sunflowerschool.ca) for the most up to date information. Any policy regarding COVID-19 will replace the above information and will be followed in place of the above information for as long as is required by the BCCDC and provincial government.

### COVID 19

Covid 19 Policies will be adapted and changed as provincial regulations change. As of January 2023 the policy is to test if you feel ill, and if the test is positive to remain home for 5 days from the start of symptoms.

### Immunization

A copy of your child’s immunization records is mandatory at the time of registration as required by the Ministry of Health and Licensing Standards. As per BC Licensing Standards, if your child is NOT immunized as per these standards, then we require a note from the conscientious objector (parent/guardian) stating that their child is not immunized and in the event of an outbreak, their child will be asked to remain at home until such time as the risk to that child is significantly mitigated or eliminated.

### Outbreaks

We will post information about any outbreak of illness on the door to our school and make every effort to contact families by email or phone directly to communicate this. During an outbreak, it may be necessary to close the school, in which case we will follow instructions and recommendations by Vancouver Coastal Health Authorities. Fees will not be refunded in the event of an outbreak.

### Prevention

Sunflower ELS acknowledges the importance of preventative health practice through the following practices:

- Stop the spread of germs by washing hands upon entry, before eating, after eating, after toileting and at the staff’s discretion
- Teach children to sneeze/cough into their arm instead of their hands
- Encouraging healthy eating, plenty of exercise and outdoor play and lots of sleep to stay strong and healthy
- Staff will keep the school clean and toys sanitized using a bleach and water solution
- Children and adults are to change from outdoor shoes to indoor shoes upon entry into the classroom.



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Please see our separate policy in relation to COVID-19 in a separate document, and on our website [www.sunflowerschool.ca](http://www.sunflowerschool.ca) for the most up to date information.

### Medication

Sunflower staff can administer prescription medication in its original container, with the pharmacist's label stating the child's name, medication prescribed, dosage, duration, and expiry date.

Over-the-counter medication will only be administered when accompanied by a written letter from your child's doctor stating all the same information outline above, along with the reason for administering.

In both cases, parents must complete a *Consent to Administer Medication* form to authorize the administration of the medication provided. We encourage all families to administer their child's medication before coming to preschool, when possible.

### Allergies

The appropriate emergency and allergy forms must be completed by all parents of children that have been diagnosed with an allergy. These will be provided at registration, or later if an allergy is identified once the child is already registered at the school.

Parents/Guardians have the responsibility to provide a detailed individual emergency care plan for their child, and to train all Sunflower staff on their child's emergency plan prior to the first day of care. It is always mandatory for a child with an anaphylactic allergy to carry an EpiPen. It is the Parent/Guardian's responsibility to inform Sunflower staff of a child's allergy at the time of registration and to provide regular updates of any changes to an allergy or emergency care plan. At Sunflower, we take allergies very seriously and in the case a child is severely allergic, we will make all efforts to ensure the school is free of the allergen/s in question.

### Medical Care Plans

Parents of children that have been diagnosed with a medical condition (seizures, diabetes, etc.) that may result in an emergency, have the responsibility to provide a detailed emergency care plan for their child and to train all Sunflower staff on their child's emergency plan prior to the first day of care.

### Gender Inclusive Washroom Facilities

Sunflower ELS believes in supporting a gender inclusive space for children which includes following Capilano Elementary Schools Lead by having gender neutral washrooms for children of all ages. Signage mirrors that of Capilano Elementary and older children use a bathroom pass to account for attendance. Preschool students use the washroom with an adult present.



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### Active, Messy, Outdoor and Risky Play

At Sunflower we believe that it is important that children have access to the outdoors in all types of weather, and that children can engage in play that is considered messy: paint, mud, water, dough, clay, etc. Please ensure your child is appropriately dressed for the weather and has a spare set of clothes to change into at the school, or in their bag. Your child's clothing may get wet or dirty and we encourage parents to dress their children with this in mind. Sunflower cannot bear any responsibility for clothing and accessories marked or stained during the course of our programming, and we really appreciate it when this is not a concern for the teachers and the children, so everyone can focus on enjoying their time at school with a certain sense of freedom to explore, experiment and *make a mess* as part of the learning process.

#### Active Play

The publication *British Columbia Director of Licensing Standard of Practice - Active Play* recommends active play and physical movement be incorporated in the childcare environment throughout the daily routines and activities. Our licensed program must ensure the minimum outdoor active play requirements are met; programs 2-3 hours in length must ensure a minimum of 30 minutes of outdoor active play, while programs 3-4 hours in length must ensure a minimum of 40 minutes. Indoor active play is acceptable when weather is inclement. We have a private garden and large gym to accommodate this requirement, and the children's need for physical activity.



#### Messy Play

We offer **time and space** for exploration and discovery. We want children to freely engage with a variety of materials and experiences, without anxiety. Sometimes our explorations result in wet, dirty, colorful clothing. Please ensure the clothing your child wears to school will allow them to immerse themselves in the environment without worrying about the state of their clothing or the repercussions of leaving Sunflower in clothing that has become messy during their time with us. This type of freedom to explore is a vital part of a child's development, and so much learning goes on when they are able to immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, smells and textures of different materials, and the world around them.

#### Process over Product

At Sunflower, and echoed throughout the Reggio Emilia philosophy, **we value process over product in all areas of our practice**. This means, there won't always be physical examples of art or mark making to take home at the end of the day, there will not be pre-cut turkey shapes with sticking on sent home for Thanksgiving. There won't be a generic decoration sent home for the Winter Holidays. However, there will be real, open-ended creative and exploratory experiences, documented through photographs, quotes, videos and sound clips. There will be the opportunity for children to create and represent their

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experiences in whatever ways work for them, thus removing the pressure to conform to a pre-planned, teacher-led outcome.

*Outdoor Play*

The outdoors provides children with an open and free, active learning environment with the opportunity to explore and make meaning of the natural world. As noted above, we spend time outdoors each day. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child is dressed appropriately for the weather - rain gear on wet days; warm jackets, mittens, boots, toques etc. on cold days; sunscreen, hats and appropriate footwear (running shoes, closed toe sandals etc.) on warm days.



*Risky Play*

Risky play can be defined as a thrilling and exciting activity that involves a risk of physical injury, and play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries, and learning about injury risk. Risky play helps to develop important life skills, such as:

- Balance and coordination
- Building resilience and persistence
- Awareness of the capabilities & limits of our bodies
- The ability to assess and make judgement about risk
- Handling tools safely and with purpose
- Understanding consequence to action
- Confidence and independence
- Resourcefulness
- Creativity and inventiveness
- Curiosity and wonder
- Problem-solving and resilience

Each child is unique and so the level of risk and challenge they seek will vary, yet most children will actively seek risk and challenge in play as they explore the world around them and their own physical abilities.

Life is full of risk. By providing children with opportunities to participate in risky and challenging play in a safe learning environment, we provide opportunity for the development of important life skill learnings such as making choices, problem solving, measured risk taking, and navigating their way socially and emotionally in group situations. These skills will be important right through life.



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### Walking Field Trips

Our community affords us the opportunity to walk to a variety of destinations. While we aspire to provide families with as much notice as possible there may be circumstances where our local walks are impromptu. There is an *Impromptu Walking Field Trip Consent* form in our registration package, and we ask that children wear appropriate footwear for walking when they attend Sunflower. Flip-flops and open toe sandals can make it difficult for children to enjoy their outdoor experience as they may injure themselves or find it challenging to walk for extended periods of time over varied terrain.

### **Nutrition**

Please inform staff immediately of any food allergies or dietary restrictions.

### Healthy Snacks for Children

Please provide your child with a nutritious snack and lunch sufficient in quality and quantity, depending on your program. We encourage families to pack healthy foods free of candies, chocolates, fruit juices and sodas. A water bottle should also be provided. Recommended nutrient requirements for children are outlined in the Canada Food Guide. Vancouver Coastal Health published a document titled, "Healthy Snacks for Preschoolers" which provides guidelines and examples of appropriate snacks/meals. This can be downloaded at: <https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/GK/GK.260.H43.pdf>.

### Birthdays and Special Celebrations

On Birthdays we celebrate with the child's class at snack time with our wooden birthday cake, and a song. Children work together to make a birthday hat, card, or banner, which your child has the option to wear/take home if they wish. We ask that you do not bring food items to share with the class.

### Allergies

Sunflower ELS is a nut-aware facility, to protect children that may have a nut allergy. We ask that families do **NOT** send peanuts or tree nuts in lunches and snacks however since we are in a shared community building we cannot guarantee that our facility is nut free.

### **Arrival/Departure Routines - Preschool**

The safety and well-being of all children participating in Sunflower Preschool programs is of utmost importance. We expect all parents to drop off and pick up children from their child's classroom teacher daily.

Children may not be dropped off before the program opens and must be picked up promptly at the end of the program. We will often allow five minutes of flexibility either side of pick up and drop off times, but this should be discussed and agreed with your class teacher first.

### **Arrival/Departure Routines - Out of School Care**

The safety and well-being of all children participating in Sunflower ELS programs is of utmost importance. We expect all parents to drop off and pick up children from their child's classroom teacher daily. Children in the morning program must be dropped off no later than **8:25am**. Roadside drop offs are not allowed, this is for the safety of children and staff walking to school.



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Children may not be dropped off before the program opens and must be picked up promptly at the end of the program.

### Dismissal Routine- Preschool

As a general rule, at the end of class time parents/caregivers are asked to wait in the Sunflower lobby if picking up from inside and are asked to close the gate behind them if entering the garden for collection. A teacher will stand at the door or gate and call one or two children at a time once they have verified an adult is present and ready to receive that child. Once those children are in the care of their adult, the teacher will close the door momentarily and proceed to call one or two more children and so on. This procedure ensures the teachers are able to account for the safety and well-being of each child.

Drop off and pick up routines may vary throughout the year, and your class teacher will inform you of any changes.

### When Someone Else Picks Up Your Child

Parents are required to notify staff if someone other than those listed on the authorized pick-up list will be picking up your child. If this person is unknown to the staff, they will be required to show photo identification. The alternate pick-up person must be 16 years or older. We cannot release a child to an unknown person (someone not listed on the authorized pick-up list) without prior informed consent.

### Late Pick Up

We expect that all children are picked up on time, respecting our staff's schedules and commitments. Frequent late pick-up can result in withdrawal of care.

### **Garden Use**

Sunflower ELS has a beautiful outdoor space that we refer to as our garden. The educators at Sunflower have invested a significant amount of time and energy into the maintenance and upkeep of our garden facility, including mud kitchens, raised stage areas and slacklines for the children to enjoy. At the end of school, the garden is locked. We ask that parents please respect the locks on our gates and not let their children enter the garden outside of school hours (evenings, weekends, and after 3:30pm). Any person that enters the garden outside of program hours is trespassing and assumes all responsibility and liability for his/her actions. Violation of this policy may result in withdrawal of care.

### **Parent Participation**

Parents, guardians, and family members all play an integral role in the learning and development of a child. When it comes to your child, you are the expert! At Sunflower, we value our partnerships with families, and seek to walk alongside them in a supportive, respectful and informative way. Prior to enrolling in a Sunflower program, we ask that you thoroughly review this Handbook. Families are encouraged to work productively with our team by staying informed about their child's program, our curriculum, and routines, and by taking part as much as possible. Thoughtful questions and suggestions are always welcomed. It is important for families to share information regarding events and situations



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affecting children outside of the school, so teachers can approach any issues with an in-depth understanding and see behavior in its correct context. We also strive to provide you with regular, timely information related to your child's learning experience.

During class time, drop-off, and dismissal times, the teacher's number one priority is the safety and well-being of the children. While communication is important and highly valued, it may be necessary to schedule a meeting to best address any questions or concerns. Open, honest, and respectful dialogue assists us to work together with families to provide children with the absolute best education and care.

### Parent Communication

Parent-teacher communication is the primary responsibility for families and staff. Through verbal and written communication of information, thoughts, ideas and by collaborating on activities and events, parents and teachers strengthen their relationship and understanding. Sunflower ELS supports communication in the following ways:

- Daily Verbal Exchange - parents and teachers exchange brief, essential information at drop off and pick-up times. Long conversations are scheduled for when teachers are not directly supervising children.
- Written Communication - Bulletin/communication boards display children's work, newsletters, calendars, and other important information. We also send these out by email. Please be sure to take time to read the notices on display when it's possible and safe to do so.
- Electronic Communication - Please ensure [director@sunflowerschool.ca](mailto:director@sunflowerschool.ca) is on your safe senders list so that information sent electronically reaches your inbox. Email is used to share a lot of information, such as newsletters, upcoming events, and school closures. Plus, documentation pieces and weekly reports.

### Electronic Communication, Photography & Media

Teachers take photos, videos, notes, and sound clips throughout the day to make the learning in our classrooms visible to families and to provide teachers and children with a tangible way to reflect. These photos, videos, notes, and sound clips may be used by the educators for documentation, displayed on the walls at Sunflower and sent home to families in our weekly emails.

Staff at Sunflower must obtain written permission from parents to disperse pictures of their children for social media or publicity purposes. We understand that some families may not consent to this and have the right to opt out. To maintain confidentiality, all emails are sent in blind copy (BCC) format, and only to families that are currently members of Sunflower ELS.

### Parent Visits and Participation

We welcome and encourage parent involvement in our program. We do recommend parents wait until their children are settled at school before volunteering or visiting the class. Please let your child's teacher know if you would like to volunteer or visit in the classroom. Parent involvement may include sharing a



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tradition or a holiday important to your family, bringing in a talent for crafts, music, cooking, or other activity. We include a *Family Volunteering Form* in our registration package, and email out specific opportunities to those who sign up as they arise.

### **School Closures**

#### Annual Calendar

Sunflower ELS follows the North Vancouver School District calendar and specifically the Capilano Elementary School Calendar (for which we provide out of school care programs). As part of our programming, Sunflower observes all professional development days throughout the year, during which time the preschool will be closed for staff training and environmental improvements. (We operate out of school care camps on those days.) We publish our calendar in advance of the upcoming school year, providing families with as much notice as possible to organize their schedules.

The whole school is closed on all BC statutory holidays, and regular preschool classes do not run in winter, spring or summer breaks. We operate a Preschool summer camp program. Please check our website for current information on summer camps.

#### Extreme Weather

In the event of inclement or extreme weather Sunflower ELS may close. If the North Vancouver School District closes schools for the day, Sunflower ELS will also close. North Vancouver School district closures will be announced generally through their website(s) and the following media outlets:

CBC 690 AM radio  
CKNW 980 AM radio  
NEWS 1130 AM radio  
CFOX 99.3 FM radio  
AM 730 radio  
City TV  
Global TV  
Fairchild TV

Sunflower will inform families of school closures as early as possible via email. On days where school is already closed (Pro D Days, Winter break, Spring Break) The Executive Director will make the call to open or close the school based on if educators can make it to Sunflower in a safe and timely manner.

Parents are encouraged to establish an emergency plan for their children in the event that schools are closed, start late, or dismiss early. Please prepare for inclement weather by dressing children appropriately.

#### Power Outage

If there is a power outage during the day, Sunflower ELS will contact BC Hydro to find out the estimated time of restoration. If it is estimated restoration will take longer than 45 minutes, then staff members will call parents to pick-up their children. If parents cannot be reached, then the emergency/alternate



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contacts noted on file will be contacted. This is a requirement under licensing regulations, as power outages pose a health and safety risk. If power is restored but the staff have already started closing procedures, staff will continue closing the facility. Parents will be able to return with their children the following day if the power continues to be in working order.

In the event of a closure every effort will be made to contact you before the program is scheduled to open.

### **Guiding Children's Behavior**

Sunflower ELS is committed to helping children grow and learn in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment. As part of this it is important that we establish clear boundaries with the children. Sunflower staff follow, *Guiding Children's Behavior*, a publication produced by the provincial government in collaboration with the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. The document can be downloaded at: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/child-day-care/guiding\\_childrens\\_behaviour\\_april\\_2017.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/child-day-care/guiding_childrens_behaviour_april_2017.pdf)

Our goal is to support children in becoming able to self-regulate and understand their emotions and behaviors. By adopting a strengths-based approach, Sunflower educators can enter a situation and identify the strengths of a child first and then support them to build on those strengths to overcome challenges. To assist children in establishing these skills we:

- Keep boundaries and expectations simple and easy to understand
- Collaborate with children to create boundaries and come up with their own expectations of themselves and others
- Help children to develop the language to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas
- Be consistent, clear, and concise
- Always think about, and talk about, the *why* behind our boundaries and expectations
- Say what we mean and focus on what children could do, rather than things they *shouldn't do*
- Give clear, simple choices
- Show respect by looking children in the eyes, and talk with them, rather than 'at' them
- Encourage the children by telling them what they are doing well, and reinforcing the positive
- Model to children how they could resolve conflicts and solve problems
- Set a good example through actions and words
- See each child as an individual, with a different family, history, and experience

### **Abuse/Suspicion of Abuse**

We are required by law, under the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*, to report any suspected cases or disclosures of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation. Our responsibility is to report suspicions or disclosures, not to determine if abuse has occurred. Investigations are the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) and/or the police, and they are responsible for contacting the parent/guardian.



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### **Emergencies**

In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, we will attempt to contact families as soon as possible. If only long distance telephone lines are available (i.e. local lines down or engaged), we attempt to contact and leave a message with your out-of-town emergency contact. If a child requires medical attention, then we will make every effort to notify parents/guardians prior to taking the child to the nearest hospital/clinic.