



St . Thomas Early Learning Centre  
ANNUAL COMMUNITY  
REPORT 2025

## Land Acknowledgement



We respectfully acknowledge that the Early Learning Centre in St. Thomas, Ontario, is situated on the traditional Territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lenape Peoples. This land is covered by Treaty 2: Mckee purchase treaty (1790) and is also part of the Dish with One Spoon WamPum Belt Covenant, a shared agreement to care for and share the resources of the land in peace and friendship.

As we work, play, and grow together in this community, we recognize our responsibility to honor the original caretakers of this land and the enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples past and present. We acknowledge the harms of colonialism and commit ourselves to truth and reconciliation.

At the Early Learning Centre, we believe that raising children in the spirit of mutual respect, curiosity, and care helps nurture a generation of peacebuilders. By teaching young children to value kindness, inclusion, and justice, we take meaningful steps toward a future where all peoples and cultures are respected and celebrated.

We are grateful to live, learn, and grow on this land.



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## Who We Are

### Mission Statement

The Early Learning Centre is committed to providing quality care to families in Elgin and the surrounding areas. This care is delivered alongside learning experiences for all children, and is provided in a safe, warm, and nurturing environment. Diverse and plentiful play experiences are encouraged and facilitated by trained and experienced staff. We provide opportunities for optimal growth in all areas of development for every child.

Our commitment to quality care embodies respect and support for the families and staff utilizing our services. This is achieved through the collaborative efforts of parents, staff, board members and community partners.

### Vision Statement

The Early Learning Centre will continue to build positive and responsive relationships with and between staff, children, families, and the community. This interconnectedness supports a holistic focus on children's social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive development, while supporting families and relationships within the community.

### Values

#### Quality

In conjunction with feedback from surveys, ELC will ensure we are providing quality environments and experiences for children to explore ideas, investigate their outcomes, and interact with others in play.

#### Relationships

Maintaining collaborative, respectful, and open relationships with individuals, families, and community partners to ensure the effective development and delivery of quality programs and services.

#### Acceptance and Respect

Families should feel that they belong, are valuable contributors to their children's learning and deserve to be engaged in a meaningful way. Every educator should feel that he/she belongs, is a valuable contributor and deserve the opportunity to engage in meaningful work.

#### Collaboration

Connecting with people who have a variety of perspectives, moving towards common goals and interests for the purpose of sharing resources, strategies, innovation, and support. We will continue to work towards a connected and collaborative community in our field.

#### Professionalism

Providing ongoing opportunities for educators to engage in critical reflection and discussion with others about pedagogy and practice to support continuous professional learning and growth.

#### Integrity

Guided by the code of ethics, we reflect the profession's core set of beliefs and values of care, respect, trust, and honesty.

## Our Team

### Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

To our wonderful community,

As we look back on 2025, the themes of growth and collaboration have truly defined our year. It has been a period of deep reflection and even deeper connection, as we worked to not only grow within our own organization but to strengthen our roots throughout St. Thomas and Elgin. Our commitment remains as firm as ever: providing a safe, nurturing, and educational environment where every child and family who walk through our doors is given the opportunity to grow, thrive, and explore.

This year, we saw our incredible educators embrace new opportunities to "ignite the spark" through mentorship programs, building vital capacity across the child care and early years sector. By participating in System-Wide Professional Learning and hands-on STRIVE opportunities, our staff have continued to lead with innovative practices that uphold the highest standards of care. This dedication to lifelong learning is exactly what allows us to adapt to challenges and remain a leader in our field.

One of our most significant milestones this year was the collaborative creation of our Strategic Plan for 2026-2031. This wasn't just a board-level exercise; it was a deeply inclusive process that drew on the aspirations of our staff, families, and partners. The resulting plan is a true reflection of our community's needs and our collective vision for the future.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our families, the passion of our educators, and the strength of our community partners. Your involvement is the key to our success, and as we look toward 2026, we are more inspired than ever by what we can achieve together.

With gratitude,

Ashley Dryfhout  
Board Chair

Michelle Good  
Executive Director

## Our People: The Heart of ELC

A Strategic Plan is only as strong as the people who bring it to life. At ELC, our educators are more than staff, they are mentors, innovators, and the steady presence that families rely on. As we move into our 2026-2031 Roadmap, we are doubling down on our investment in Enhanced Employee Growth, ensuring that our team has the support, mentorship, and recognition they deserve.

Our legacy is built on experience. With over 530 combined years of service across our team, we offer a depth of expertise and a consistency of care that is truly unique to the St. Thomas and Elgin community.

### Leadership & Support

**Executive Leadership:** Michelle Good, RECE (17 years)

**Operations & Maintenance:** Kevin Dowell (17 years), Trace Laemers (9 years)

**Finance & HR Support:** Carleen Pinnell (10 years), Priya Chandrasekaran (1 year), Rob Moir (1 year)

### The Dalewood Team

**Legacy Leaders:** Chloe Goodhue, RECE (10 years), Pam Fernandes, RECE (9 years), Jessica Hartford, RECE (8 years), Kristina Haskell, RECE (8 years), Laura McEown, RECE (8 years)

**The Team:** Sarah Pepper (7 years), Alyssa Weaver (7 years), Julia Lacelle (7 years), Emily Matthews (7 years), Morgan Spriggs (6 years), Cassandra Wilson (5 years), Nathalie Breed (5 years), Catherine Watson (5 years), Shantell Sundercock (4 years), Riley Bishop (4 years), Vivian Santos (2 years), Brayden Vaughan (2 years), Angela McEown (1 year), Natalie Denney (1 year), Jenny Richards (1 year), Maddy Hicks (<1 year), Olivia Hicks (<1 year), Muskan Muskan (<1 year), Hunter Vale (<1 year)

### The Orchard Park Team

**Legacy Leaders:** Lauren Goossens, RECE (15 years), Tracy Small, RECE (14 years), Jacqueline D'Oria, RECE (10 years), Natasha Friesen, RECE (10 years), Lindsay Lamb, RECE (9 years)

**The Team:** Jessica Durnin (7 years), Miranda Campos (5 years), Jami Wokral (2 years), Maddie Colquhoun (1 year), Brynnlee Helmer (1 year), Bidhya Gyawali (1 year), Sashi Kafle (<1 year), Lauren Van Dixhoorn (<1 year)

### The Aspen Team

**Legacy Leaders:** Rose Molina (24 years), Deanne Albic, RECE (19 years), Lisa Carter (18 years), Candice Ruyter, RECE (11 years), Oeun Sem (11 years), Mary-Ellen Hicknell, RECE (11 years), Kristen Vandenbor, RECE (9 years)

**The Team:** Taylor Parish (5 years), Rebecca Beringer (4 years), Kayla Zegers (4 years), Ramona Langille (3 years), Allison Kruppe (2 years), Trish Vaughan (1 year)

### The Aylmer Team

**Legacy Leaders:** Tammy Giesbrecht, RECE (12 years), Jordan Triska, RECE (8 years)

**The Team:** Cara Wilson (4 years), Trish Oprenchok (3 years), Helena Reimer (1 year), Fanny Schmitt (1 year), Kayla Mills (1 year), Shannon Barnes (<1 year), Paige Kueppers (<1 year), Anna Schultz (<1 year)

### Home Care Team

**Legacy Leaders:** Mandy Nicolson, RECE (32 years), Sara Weadick, RECE (17 years), Melissa Hamilton, RECE (9 years),

### Supply Support

**Legacy Leaders:** Elizabeth Gilson, RECE (9 years), Danielle Welbourn, RECE (8 years)

**The Team:** Andrea Goodhue (5 years), Maggie Dyck (2 years), Maddi Cortese (2 years), Alexandria El-Shourafa (2 years), Halley Rowsell (2 years), Cadence Hardwick (2 years), Jeannie Bamford (1 year), Robin Argenta (1 year), Avery Lister (1 year), Antonia Platten (1 year), Anna Reda (1 year), Kate Ripley (1 year), Katie Rose (1 year), Janae Gordon (1 year), Emily Hartle (1 year), Breanna Roy (1 year), Kyla Amies (<1 year), Gracie Bergen (<1 year), Nalini Bakthavachalam (<1 year), Sophie Renner (<1 year), Ainsley Good (<1 year)

## Program and Services

### Program Statement

To ensure that we provide high quality experience for families and children, our programming and pedagogy is guided by the How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014) document.

- Every child has a sense of **belonging** when they are connected to others and contributes to their world.
- Every child is developing a sense of self, health and **well-being**.
- Every child is an active and **engaged learner** who explores the world with body, mind, and senses.
- Every child is a capable communicator who **expresses** themselves in many ways.

Within a warm, nurturing environment, children actively participate in positive, interactive experiences that are based on their current interests and real-life experiences. Our programs are flexible and creative and provide children opportunities for decision-making and growth towards independence and responsibility.

We view children as resourceful and competent, capable of complex thinking and rich in potential. By observing the children's interaction and language, we learn about their interests, experiences, and needs. By recognizing and acting upon teachable moments, the program staff engage children in planning activities that are meaningful and relevant to their world. With the guidance of the educators/Home Care Providers, projects are chosen that generate enough interest and curiosity to provoke children's creative thinking and problem solving and are open to different avenues of exploration.

We value positive and responsive relationships with families. By engaging families in a meaningful way, this partnership ensures that we can focus on their child's social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive development in a holistic way.



## Centre Highlights

### **Early Learning Centre Aylmer: A Year of Discovery and Joy**

At our Aylmer Centre, this past year was filled with moments that fostered growth, learning, and a deep sense of community. By bringing the world into our classrooms and celebrating every milestone, we are living out our commitment to high-quality early learning.

#### **Bringing the Community to Life**

We believe that learning happens best when children are connected to the world around them. This year, we were thrilled to host:

- **Community Heroes:** Visits from our librarian, firefighters, and police officers brought excitement and new knowledge to our classrooms.
- **A "Plumbing" Lesson:** In one of our most memorable moments, a visiting plumber turned a repair into a playful lesson, teaching the children exactly why toys don't belong in the toilet! It was a real-life problem turned into a hands-on learning opportunity.

#### **Learning Through Exploration and Play**

Our educators created unique experiences that promoted independence and sensory discovery:

- **Active Discovery:** From community walks and bike rodeos to the messy fun of Mud Day, these activities encouraged physical development and a sense of wonder.
- **Calendar Fun Days:** Creative themed days kept the excitement alive, allowing children to strengthen their social skills and creativity in a joyful environment.

#### **Celebrating Family and Milestones**

Building a sense of belonging for our families is at the heart of what we do. We cherished the moments where our community came together:

- **Heartwarming Traditions:** From our festive Halloween and Christmas Family Nights to a magical visit from Santa.
- **Graduation:** A special day celebrating the achievements of our little graduates as they prepared for their next big adventure with confidence and pride.

#### **Our Roadmap Connection**

The vibrant life at our Aylmer Centre is a direct reflection of our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Expanded Quality Services:** Turning everyday moments—like a plumber's visit—into rich pedagogical experiences.
- **Increased Organizational Capacity:** Building deep roots in the community through local partnerships and visits.
- **Relationship Building:** Creating joyful memories that bring our families and educators closer together.

### **Aspen Centre: Building Confidence and Connection**

This year at Aspen was all about excitement, community spirit, and celebrating the milestones that matter most to our families. By blending safety education with heartfelt celebrations, we've created an environment where children feel both secure and inspired.

#### **Growing Through Discovery and Play**

Our children gained new skills and explored their community through hands-on discovery: Active Discovery: Bike days, water play, and the ever-popular Mud Day gave children a chance to build physical skills and explore their senses through active play.

- **The "Big Hill" Adventures:** Regular trips to the local park encouraged gross motor development and teamwork as children worked together to climb and run on the hill, building their confidence and problem-solving skills along the way.
- **Community Connections:** From the excitement of a fire truck visit to the joy of welcoming "Mystery Readers" into our classrooms, the children loved learning about the world around them.

#### **Heartwarming Family Traditions**

Building a strong sense of community between home and the Centre is at the core of what we do. This year, we cherished our time together during:

- **Festive Family Events:** Our Halloween dress-up fun night, the Christmas pajama family party, and our shared Christmas lunch created warm, lasting memories for our families and staff.
- **Shared Joy:** These events provided a space for children to express themselves, build friendships, and gain independence in a supportive community.

#### **Celebrating Growth and New Beginnings**

Our Graduation ceremony was a proud moment for everyone. It was a beautiful way to mark the incredible growth we've seen in our children and to celebrate the new adventures waiting for them as they move forward.

#### **Our Roadmap Connection**

The milestones at Aspen this year directly align with our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Expanded Quality Services:** Using local community spaces like the park to enhance physical and social pedagogy.
- **Relationship Building:** Creating a variety of family-focused events that strengthen our sense of community.
- **Enhanced Employee Growth:** Supporting educators as they facilitate creative "Mystery Reader" and discovery-based programming.

## **2025: A Year of Connection at Orchard Park**

As we reflect on the past year, we are so grateful for the experiences and connections that have shaped our community. This year was defined by three core themes that reflect who we are and where we are going:

### **Strengthening Our Team**

We believe that a nurturing environment for children starts with a supported team. This year, we took our collaboration outdoors—from a rejuvenating beach walk to a team-building day at Timbernook. These moments away from the classroom reinforced our bonds and reminded us that we are better together.

### **Investing in the Future of ECE**

It was a privilege to mentor aspiring educators from Fanshawe College St. Thomas. By providing hands-on experience and guidance, we helped these students build their confidence and passion for early childhood education, ensuring a strong future for our profession.

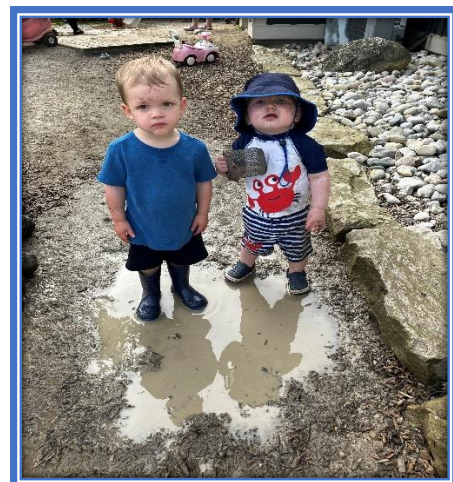
### **Celebrating Our Diverse Community**

Diversity is at the heart of our Centre. From the lights of Diwali and the joy of Christmas to the messy fun of International Mud Day, our children explored cultural traditions that build empathy, respect, and curiosity about the world around them.

### **Looking Ahead: Our 2026–2031 Roadmap**

The successes we celebrated this year at Orchard Park are the foundation for our new Strategic Plan. As we move forward, we will continue to focus on:

- **Quality Services:** Deepening our cultural celebrations and pedagogical excellence.
- **Employee Growth:** Expanding mentorship and team-building opportunities.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Strengthening our community partnerships to serve more families.



## **Dalewood Centre: A Year of Connection and Community**

We've had another great year at Dalewood. As a larger site, we believe our strength lies in building a close-knit family atmosphere through deep and meaningful connections. This year was defined by a commitment to intentional time and care and strengthening our community ties.

### **Expanding Our Horizons**

We took our learning beyond the classroom to explore our city and learn from our community partners:

- Our preschool children enjoyed a field trip to the St. Thomas Railway Museum to explore a little piece of local history- venturing onto train cars and enjoying some dramatic play experiences together in the construction zone set up by our incredible community members. #Stthomasproud
- We coordinated a wonderful visit to our local Valleyview Long-Term Care Facility, where the children starred in the Halloween Parade for the residents. A fun way to build connection within the community and share a little joyful spirit.

### **Revitalizing Our Learning Environments**

Creating spaces where play and learning can flourish:

- **Refresh, Renew:** Dalewood underwent some serious exterior construction- receiving clean and modern siding, leveling of our walkways, and upgraded lights around the building and parking lot, keeping families safe through darker morning and evenings.
- **Learning Essentials:** We were able to purchase many new art materials, sensory items, classroom toys, outdoor materials and bikes. The children have been thrilled to explore each new item as the classrooms introduce them.
- **Outdoor Green Space:** Our front preschool yard received some attention this year. A beautiful walkway now stretches out from our CC3 classroom. The ground has been graded, and new grass and trees were added to the space to grow alongside the children for years to come. We hope to include a vegetable garden in the future where children can have the opportunity to contribute to their environment and well-being.

### **A Community of Educators and Families**

Family involvement remains the highlight of our year. Our annual Halloween and Christmas Family Nights brought us all together for games and shared joy. We also navigated a year of transition with our team, welcoming new educators to the Dalewood family and celebrating the contributions of those moving on to new adventures.

During the month of October our Dalewood family got a little bit bigger as we welcomed our Orchard Park location onto site due to an unforeseen flood. The incredible staff and management teams worked diligently together to make the temporary measures as smooth as possible for the children and families in our care- it wasn't perfect, but it was a true testament to the care, commitment and dedication our educators put forth to create a warm, welcoming and supportive atmosphere, especially in a time of need.

### Our Roadmap Connection

The progress at Dalewood this year is a clear reflection of our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Increased Organizational Capacity:** Investing in site improvements and facility upgrades to enhance the learning environment.
- **Enhanced Employee Growth:** Supporting a large team through transitions and welcoming new educators into our culture.
- **Expanded Quality Services:** Using technology like Lillio to bridge the gap between classroom discovery and home. We were also able to introduce our new financial portal, Digibot, supporting our families and finance team, keeping us well organized.



## **Elgin Home Child Care: Quality in Every Home**

Our Home Care division offers a personalized, community-focused alternative to traditional care, providing children with a warm and secure home-like environment. This past year, we've focused on empowering our providers and families through deep mentorship and community connection—key pillars of our roadmap for the future.

### **Professional Mentorship in Action**

At the heart of our model is the relationship between our providers and our Home Visitors (RECEs). This year, we've seen incredible growth through:

- Ongoing on-site professional support that brings the latest early learning research into the home environment.
- Collaborative mentorship that helps providers create high-quality, innovative learning experiences for every child.

### **Empowering Our Providers and Families**

We believe that when our providers have the right tools, children thrive. This year, we've strengthened our support by:

- Providing specialized learning materials and equipment to enrich daily play.
- Hosting professional development workshops to keep our providers at the forefront of the field.

### **A Community-Connected Experience**

Home care doesn't mean being isolated. Our children are active participants in the community they live in. This year's highlights included:

- Regular visits to local parks, libraries, and EarlyON programs.
- Celebrating together at the St. Thomas and Aylmer EarlyON Children's Festivals.

### **Our Roadmap Connection**

These highlights in Home Care directly support our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan by:

- Expanding Quality Services: Ensuring the same high standards of pedagogical support in home-based settings.
- Enhancing Employee Growth: Providing specialized mentorship for our dedicated home care providers.
- Increasing Organizational Capacity: Strengthening our ties to local community resources and festivals.

## Fueling Growth: Nutrition at ELC

At ELC, we believe that healthy bodies are the foundation for active minds. Our nutrition program is more than just a meal service; it is a vital part of our curriculum that supports the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of every child in our care.

### Nourishing the Whole Child

By providing balanced, nutrient-rich meals, we ensure that every child has the sustained energy they need to explore and thrive. Our commitment to high-quality nutrition focuses on:

- **Cognitive and Emotional Support:** Stabilizing blood sugar to enhance focus, memory, and mood regulation throughout the day.
- **Physical Stamina for Play:** Providing the consistent energy required for both active outdoor movement and quiet indoor concentration.

### Building Lifelong Healthy Habits

We are proud to help our children build a strong foundation for their future health. This year, our focus has been on:

- **Immune System Strength:** Using vitamin-rich, whole-food ingredients that protect and support our children as they grow.
- **Cultural Appreciation:** Establishing positive eating habits and an appreciation for diverse, cultural foods from a young age.

### Our Roadmap Connection

Our focus on nutrition is a key pillar of our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Expanded Quality Services:** Treating nutrition as a core pedagogical support that enhances a child's ability to learn.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Maintaining high standards for health, safety, and wellness across all our Centre's and home care settings.
- **Relationship Building:** Partnering with families to support healthy development that continues long after the child leaves our Centre.



## Empowering Our Educators: System-Wide Professional Learning

Our staff are the heart of ELC, and their growth is a direct investment in the quality of care our children receive. This year's System-Wide Professional Learning Day served as a powerful catalyst for collaboration and innovation across our entire organization.

### Sparkling Innovation and Collaboration

Our educators stepped away from their classrooms to immerse themselves in dynamic workshops and hands-on training. These interactive sessions were designed to:

- **Fresh Perspectives:** Spark new ideas on child development and pedagogical excellence.
- **Skill Building:** Gain evidence-based strategies that can be implemented immediately in both indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- **Shared Vision:** Align our team around the highest standards of care in St. Thomas and Elgin.
- 

### Building a Vibrant Future

The impact of this day extends far beyond the event itself. Our team returned to their Center's feeling inspired and empowered. This commitment to continuous professional growth ensures that we are not only strengthening the foundations of early childhood education today but are also building a more vibrant and innovative future for our entire community.

### Our Roadmap Connection

This system-wide investment is a cornerstone of our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Enhanced Employee Growth:** Creating a culture of continuous learning and mentorship.
- **Expanded Quality Services:** Ensuring our pedagogical approach is always grounded in the latest research.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Building a strong, unified team that is ready to lead the sector forward.

## 2025: Our Impact by the Numbers

While the stories from our Centre's show the "heart" of our work, our service statistics reflect the scale of our commitment to St. Thomas and Elgin County. In 2024, we continued to ensure that high-quality, affordable early learning was accessible to the families who need us most.

### Providing Essential Care for Our Community

Our reach across the region remains strong, providing families with flexible, inclusive, and dependable care options:

- **590 Children Enrolled:** Across our four licensed Center's and our home childcare programs, 590 children were supported in reaching their full potential through playful learning.
- **492 Families Served:** We provided nearly 500 families in St. Thomas and surrounding areas with access to accessible and affordable early learning.
- **35 Licensed Home-Based Programs:** Our home care division provided diverse care options across St. Thomas and Elgin County.
- **4 Licensed Centre's:** Our physical sites offered engaged staff, nutritious menus, and inclusive environments where every culture is embraced.

### Living Our Board Priorities

Our team worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that our board priorities were reflected in every classroom and home:

**Inclusion & Accessibility:** We ensured our spaces were physically, intellectually, and emotionally accessible, providing resources to support the unique strengths and needs of every child.

**Enriching Environments:** From science exploration to outdoor play, we curated indoor and outdoor activities that sparked curiosity and supported well-being.

**Staff Excellence:** We prioritized professional development, supporting our educators in building the strategies needed to respond to children's individual needs.

### Our Roadmap Connection

These statistics are the baseline for our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

- **Increased Organizational Capacity:** Using these enrollment numbers to identify where and how we can grow to meet community demand.
- **Enhanced Employee Growth:** Continuing to invest in the 80+ staff members who make these statistics possible.
- **Expanded Quality Services:** Ensuring that as we serve more families, the individualized and group play experiences remain world-class.

## Strategic Plan 2026–2031: At a Glance

As we look toward the future of St. Thomas Early Learning Centre, our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan serves as our roadmap. This plan is built on our commitment to quality, relationships, and the holistic development of every child in our care. We have identified three core directions that will guide our work over the next five years:

### Strategic Direction One: Expanded Quality Services for Children and Families

We are committed to deepening the quality of our programming and how we connect with our families.

- Enhancing pedagogical supports for our educators.
- Developing a comprehensive parent engagement strategy.
- Upgrading technology and classroom supplies to support modern learning.

### Strategic Direction Two: Enhanced Employee Growth and Development

Our staff are the heart of ELC. We are investing in the people who make our centres a warm, nurturing place for children.

- Launching a formal staff mentorship program.
- Creating a robust professional learning and recognition plan.
- Improving organizational communication to ensure every team member is supported.

### Strategic Direction Three: Increased Organizational Capacity for Growth

To serve more families in our community, we are focused on building a sustainable and strong foundation.

- Developing leadership and succession planning to ensure long-term stability.
- Enhancing customer service and family communication strategies.
- Assessing our facilities to prepare for future expansion and community needs.

## Our Commitment

This plan isn't just a document; it's our promise to continue providing a safe, respectful, and high-quality early learning environment where every child can thrive.

## Cultivating Community: Our St. Thomas & Elgin Partnerships 🤝

At ELC, we believe that it takes a village to raise a child, and we are proud to be part of such a vibrant one. This year, we were thrilled to cultivate meaningful connections that helped our children build a deep sense of belonging within the community we call home.

### Learning from Our Local Heroes

Our programs were filled with opportunities for children to learn directly from the people who keep our community safe and inspired. We were honored to welcome:

- **The Fire & Police Services:** From flashing lights to friendly faces, these visits sparked curiosity and taught valuable lessons about safety and service.
- **The St. Thomas Public Library:** A highlight of our year was the visit from the Library Bus! Children had the chance to climb aboard and explore, picking out their won books and even signing up for their very first library card right on-site. It was a wonderful way to foster independence and lifelong love of reading.

### Innovation in Physical Literacy

This year, we introduced our children to \*\*\*"Funky Kids,"\*\* an internationally recognized, non-competitive physical literacy program. By focusing on cognitive, physical, and social development, this program helped our children:

- Build confidence through movement and play.
- Develop key social skills in a fun, inclusive environment.

### Intergenerational Connection

In one of our most heartwarming events of the year, our children donned their favorite costumes for a special trip to a local nursing home. This visit was about more than just fun; it was about:

- **Fostering Respect and Understanding:** Bringing smiles to the residents while helping children appreciate the different generations in our community.
- **Building Empathy:** Creating lasting memories through simple acts of joy and connection.

### Our Roadmap Connection

Cultivating these community ties is a central pillar of our 2026–2031 Strategic Plan:

**Increased Organizational Capacity:** Strengthening our partnerships with local organizations and experts to enrich our programming.

**Expanded Quality Services:** Integrating specialized programs like "Funky Kids" to support holistic child development.

**Relationship Building:** Ensuring our children and families feel connected to the people and places that make St. Thomas and Elgin unique.

## Testimonials from Families

### **Blaire Courville**

16 Oct 2025, 3:34 PM

*Thank you to each of you for everything you do every single day. It's so clear how much love, patience, and creativity you bring into your work. My girls feel so safe, cared for, and joyfully silly in your presence. You truly make a difference in their lives — and in ours as parents — and we're so grateful for all that you do.*

*-the Walls*

### **Lucas Allman**

27 Aug 2025, 6:00 PM

*We had the chance to talk with most of you today, but we just wanted to say thanks one more time to all of you.*

*Whether you've been there since Ella's first day or you've only met Clara recently, you've all had a huge impact on us as parents and on our daughters.*

*Our introduction to daycare was dropping Ella off at the door during the pandemic, and despite not seeing what the inside looked like for probably a year we still felt so safe dropping her off with the ELC family.*

*We can't tell you how comforting it's been to know that our kids are loved, treated with respect and guided through so many early milestones by people we've come to know and trust so much.*

*Please know that even though this is the end of our journey with ELC you have all played an important role in the lives of Ella and Clara and your impact will carry on with them as they become the wonderful people they will be.*

*We will miss you!*

### **To the Aspen teachers,**

*We can't tell you enough how much we appreciate what you guys do day in and day out! You go above and beyond every day to make sure Petey is safe and well taken care of but also loved and continuously learning! From Miss Lisa tickles to Miss Kayla's top hair dressing skills that we can't come close to replicating, Peyton truly has so much fun every day and that is the best feeling as parents! Happy ECE appreciation day and thank you for being such amazing teachers and role models for P :)*

*Love, Petey, Maddie and Ray!*

***To all the wonderful teachers at Aspen,***

*Thank you for the love, patience, and creativity you bring to caring for our children every day. Miss Taylor, Miss Oeun, and Miss Allison — along with each one of you — have made such a meaningful difference in Abigail's life. We've seen an amazing improvement in her communication skills, toileting independence, and so much more, all thanks to the supportive and engaging environment you've created. Your dedication helps our kids learn, grow, and thrive, and for that, we are deeply grateful.*

*With heartfelt thanks,  
Minu and Jestine Augusty*

***Please pass this message along to Hunter in the kitchen.***

*Amazing menu and food choices! I'm really impressed!! Great job!  
I've been watching what the kids are eating and WOW, so awesome lately since you have been in the kitchen!*

*Thank you,  
Melanie*

*We can't believe our time at ELC has come to an end! Over the past 7 years, all three of our girls have been so lucky to grow, learn, and be cared for by so many amazing educators here.*

*Thank you for creating a place that always felt safe, fun, and filled with love. We are so grateful for the impact you've had on each of our girls.*

*We will miss you!*

*-Carrie, Matthew & The Girls*

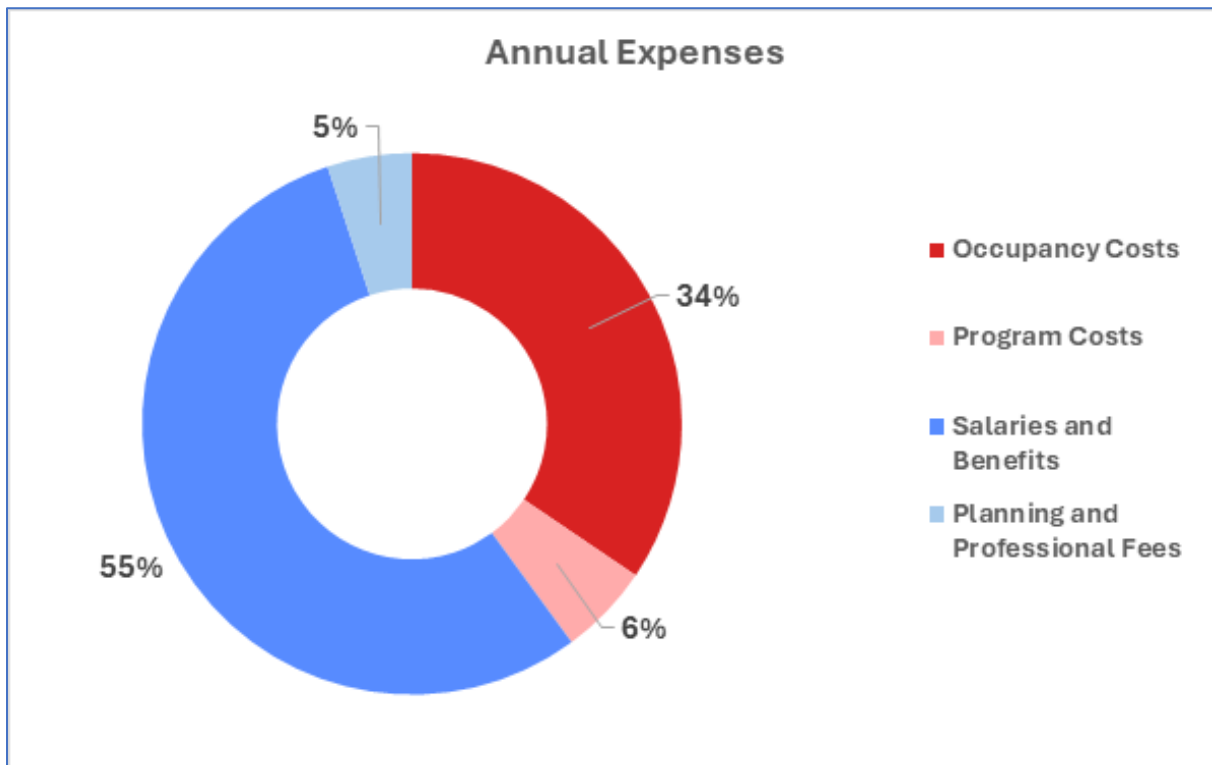
## With Thanks to our Funders

We are deeply grateful for the generous support from St. Thomas-Elgin Children Services, whose contribution has played a vital role in advancing our mission to provide high-quality, accessible child care. Your commitment to our cause has made a meaningful difference in the lives of the families we serve, ensuring that children receive the care, attention, and early learning opportunities they deserve.

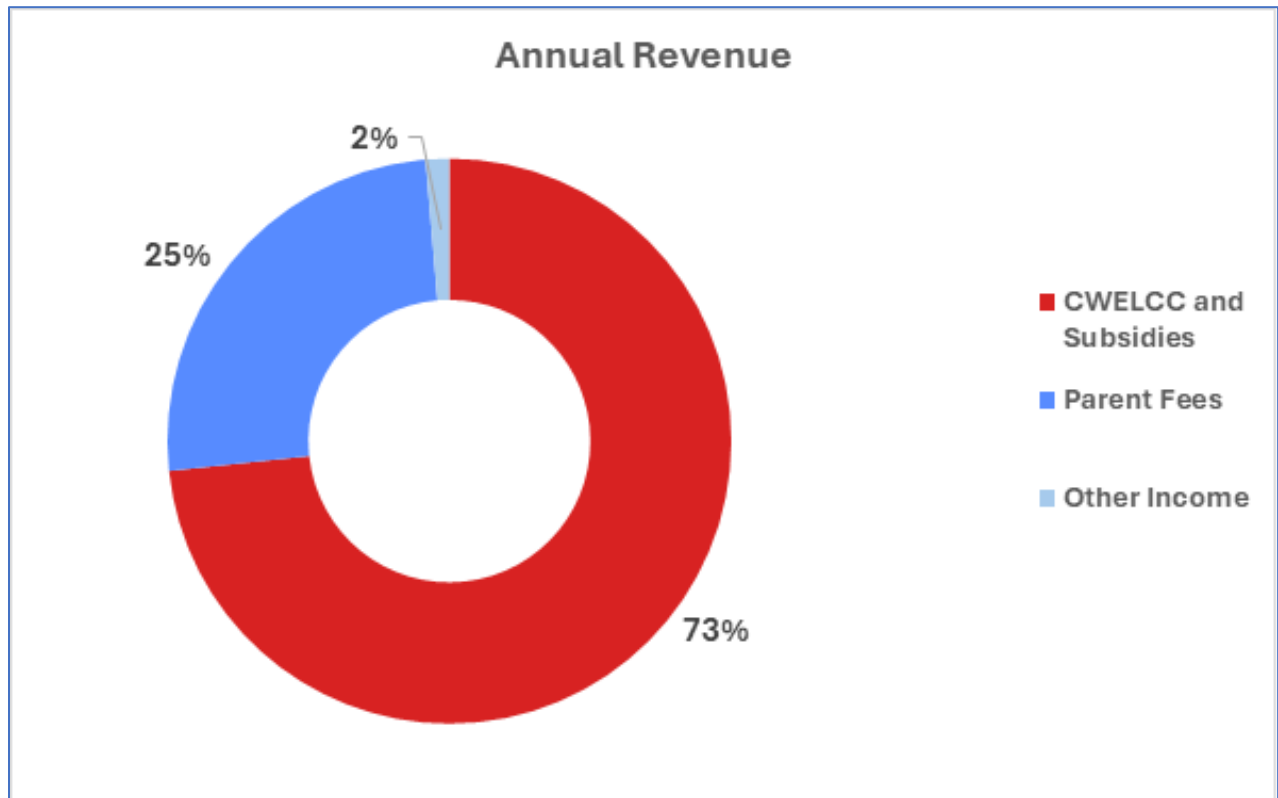
With your partnership, we continue to foster a nurturing and educational environment where every child can thrive. Thank you for your continued trust and dedication to the well-being of our community.



## Financials



| Expenses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Program and Services</b><br>Staff Development • Housekeeping/Hygiene • License Fees • Program Supplies • Food/Kitchen Supplies                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Salaries &amp; Benefits</b><br>All Salaries, Wages, and Benefits for all Staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Occupancy Costs</b><br>Homecare Provider Fees • Mortgage/Interest • Payments Bank Fees • Rent • Taxes • Utilities • Telephone • Internet • Building Upgrades & Maintenance • Office Equipment • Equipment • Health & Safety Expenses • Playground Costs                                         |
| <b>Planning and Professional Fees</b><br>Bad Debts • Payroll Processing Change • Mileage • Computer Software • Depreciation & Amortization • Office Supplies • Insurance • Accounting/Auditing • Advertising • Board/Staff Expense • Credit Card Merchant Fees • Bank Charges • Computer Equipment |



| Revenue                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CWELCC</b><br>All Monies received through the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care program Funds received from the City of St. Thomas to support accessible care and staff development |
| <b>Parent Fees</b><br>Parents' portion of Childcare Fees                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Other Income</b><br>Fundraising • Interest income • Merry Mount • Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions                                                                        |