

Reaching for Rainbows After School Program



Volunteer Handbook

Welcome

Volunteers bring a wealth of life experiences, talents, skills and resources to the Reaching for Rainbows Program. Volunteers participate in and enrich our program.

Reaching for Rainbows benefits from volunteer involvement; we are committed to ensuring that our volunteers also benefit from their volunteer work. Volunteers are selected and placed on the basis of their skills and *Reaching for Rainbows* program requirements, using a screening process. An orientation and initial training will be given before the program begins and further training will be offered as required.

Our goal is very simple:

We aim to help every child to be happy and secure, and to develop to her true potential. To meet this goal, we offer safe, nurturing, stimulating, developmental opportunities that reflect each young girl's interests and needs.

Introduction

The Context

The Counties of Prince Edward and Hastings have one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in Ontario.

In 2010, testing indicated that 40 percent of students in the County from K-4 were lagging behind in the areas of academics, literacy, physical health and emotional maturity.

The Background

The congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Picton wants the best for the children of Picton. It believed that its building, located 2 blocks from Queen Elizabeth School, would serve as a perfect place to offer a program to support children who may be vulnerable.

The Vision

St. Andrew's built a team of community professionals who share a passion for the healthy development of children. Together we are creating *REACHING FOR RAINBOWS*, an after school project that will focus on girls and their unique needs. This project will begin with 12 girls in grade 1 (referred to us by our partner social agencies) who will gather 3 days a week. The hall at St. Andrew's will host a program where they can participate in play-based learning supported by a team of compassionate and trained volunteers.

Our Partners

The following organizations are officially working with us, offering resources and referring clients:

- Prince Edward Children's Aid Society
- Children's Mental Health
- Alternatives for Women

Benefits of Volunteering at *Reaching for Rainbows*

- Work and play with young children
- Be part of a community-based initiative

Our Volunteers

What kind of person is a successful volunteer at *Reaching for Rainbows*? Some of the characteristics that we look for include:

- Understands the importance of communicating at the child's level, verbally and physically
- Asks open ended questions, which encourage a child to discuss what's happening, or to explore new ideas (i.e. "Can you tell me what you've built? Who lives there?")
- Is open to new ideas
- Enjoys getting involved with children and their play
- Is able to help children when needed, without taking over
- Is warm and friendly, with a sense of humour
- Understands that each child is a unique individual who is developing at their own pace, and must be encouraged and supported

A Volunteer's Responsibilities

It is a volunteer's responsibility:

- To perform the tasks assigned to the best of their ability
- To meet time commitments of the position, or to provide advance notice so that alternative arrangements can be made
- To ask for help when it is needed to understand or perform their tasks
- To follow the organizational policies and procedures of *Reaching for Rainbows*, as outlined in the Volunteer Handbook
- To support the philosophy of the *Reaching for Rainbows* program
- To respect the privacy of individuals and to maintain matters of confidentiality
- To be open-minded and respectful towards opinions that are shared with you
- To participate in training and meetings as requested

A Volunteer's Rights

It is a volunteer's right:

- To be assigned a position that is worthwhile/ interesting/ meaningful
- To receive the orientation, training and supervision necessary to carry out the volunteer assignment
- To be treated with respect
- To be consulted about matters which directly or indirectly affect the volunteer or the volunteer's contribution
- To receive feedback on and regular evaluation of their work
- To be recognized and appreciated for their contribution to the program
- To receive guidance and direction from someone who is experienced, willing and who has the time to invest in volunteers
- To have a safe working environment

How children learn

Children learn and grow through play. When they are involved in programs they are solving problems, learning to follow through, making decisions, concentrating, socializing, communicating, making things and observing. These activities enable children to learn by doing and to enjoy the pleasure of being self-directed learners.

Benefits for the Child

The *Reaching for Rainbows* Program is designed around a belief that good educational experiences can help a child to develop:

- an interest in learning
- a willingness to try new activities
- a willingness to trust adults
- a strong sense of independence

These qualities will help the child be better prepared for school and life-long learning. We believe that the most important building blocks for learning are:

- self-esteem
- confidence
- emotional control
- social behaviour

Our program allows young girls to learn and develop at their own pace. We believe that each child is different, and that these differences must be encouraged and supported.

Learning in the Playroom

Our playroom is divided into several interest areas where the girls and volunteers play and learn: books, art, dramatic, sensory, blocks, toys and games. Each of these areas offers many more learning opportunities than might initially meet the eye.

The *Reaching for Rainbows* Program encourages the following important areas of learning:

- Personal and Social
- Physical
- Language
- Science and Discovery
- Creative
- Mathematics

Personal and Social

As children develop socially, they learn to share, cooperate and take turns. Through their play, children learn to respect the rights of others. Learning happens in interactive playrooms where children discuss their plans, feelings, opinions and share experiences with the adults and other children.

Physical

Children are energetic and creative. They enjoy activities that build skills, physical endurance and that stimulate their curious minds. Activities that involve balancing, weight transfer and large muscle development (i.e. catching, dancing and running) help

children develop coordination. Playing with manipulative materials such as bead work, scissors, blocks and puzzles that vary in size and skill helps develop fine motor skills.

Language

Children build their language and literacy skills through daily interactions with adults and engage in enriched language activities such as lotto and board games, reading story books, singing songs, creating and performing plays and puppet shows.

Science and Discovery

In order to learn about the world, children rely on the five main senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. For young children, access to materials, freedom to manipulate, transform and combine them is essential in the process of *discovery*.

Sand and water tables allow children to learn about concepts of volume and fractions.

Creativity

Through art, children learn to be creative, imaginative and to express themselves. Through drama, movement and music, children learn to express their individuality.

Mathematics

The world of mathematics is a world of inquiry, exploration and discovery. Children learn best through manipulation of materials and use of all the senses. Children also learn math through cooking, art, music, science and games.

Working with Young Children

The Volunteer's Role

When working with children, it is very important that you position yourself at their level. Good eye contact, at their level, helps children welcome you into their play. During programs, volunteers do the following:

- participate in children's play (showing that adults can have fun and be good playmates)
- enjoy being with the child (self-esteem)
- are a positive role model (good manners, social skills)
- talk with children about what they are doing (helping children express themselves; validating their play)
- suggest new possibilities for play (helping children extend their language and play)
- pose questions, help them analyze the problem (assist children in solving problems)

It's important that you have fun and enjoy being with children. They quickly sense when an adult truly likes them, and respond accordingly.

Behaviour Guidance

Our goal is to provide a safe happy learning environment for children. We believe that children must always be treated with respect, and that self-esteem is important in the healthy development of all children.

Our behaviour guidance strategies are consistent with this belief. Therefore,

Reaching for Rainbows does not allow or tolerate the physical or verbal abuse:

- of one child by another
- of a child by a staff member or volunteer
- of a child by a parent

We do not allow the following forms of punishment in our program:

- striking, spanking or hurting a child
- humiliating or insulting a child, or using sarcasm to undermine their self-respect
- yelling at a child
- depriving a child of basic needs
- threatening a child
- leaving a child alone

Conflicts are a natural part of young children's play and in a supportive climate; adults see such conflicts as learning opportunities and approach them in a matter of fact manner. They know that disagreements arise from children's normal development and desires, not because they are being "bad" or "stubborn". The children need to learn social skills just as they need to learn to read and write. Part of this learning is identifying that there is a problem, and understanding that people can solve such problems together.

Six Steps to Resolving Conflict with Children



1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
 - Place yourself between the children, on their level.
 - Use a calm voice and gentle touch.
 - Remain neutral rather than take sides.



2. Acknowledge children's feelings.
 - "You look really upset."
 - Let children know you need to hold any object in question



3. Gather information.
 - "What's the problem?"
4. Restate the problem.



5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
 - "So the problem is..."
 - "What can we do to solve this problem?"
 - Encourage children to think of a solution.



6. Be prepared to give follow up support.
 - "You solved the problem!"
 - Stay near the children.



Reaching for Rainbows Procedures

Accident Reporting

All accidents and injuries that occur while you are a volunteer must be reported to the Program Director, so that an "Accident Report Form" can be completed. Incidents to be reported include falls, cuts, or a volunteer or child being hit by another child.

Attendance and Late Arrival

The time that a volunteer contributes to *Reaching for Rainbows* is valuable. If you are unable to be present at the program or are going to be late, please contact the Volunteer Co-coordinator as soon as possible.

Regular attendance is a program requirement; the Program Director plans the daily program with scheduled volunteer participation in mind. If a volunteer's attendance is inconsistent, the Program Director will discuss the matter with the volunteer. If the problem continues, the Volunteer will be asked to resign from the program.

Child Abuse/ Duty to Report

Everyone, not just professionals, who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is or may be in need of protection, has a duty to report directly to a Children's Aid Society. If you are told information that leads you to be concerned, you must contact the Children's Aid Society.

Confidentiality and Privacy

The children may share information of a confidential and personal nature with you during program time. If you are concerned about information you have been told, please speak privately with Program Director as soon as the program has ended.

Please do not discuss any information you may have heard with other volunteers, family, other parents or friends. All volunteers sign a Confidentiality Policy prior to commencing their volunteer position.

Diversity

At *Reaching for Rainbows*, staff, volunteers, caregivers, families and visitors are treated equally with dignity and respect. If you have questions or concerns, please speak with the Program Director or the Volunteer Coordinator.

Dress Code

Clothing and shoes should be comfortable, safe and appropriate.

Giving Advice

During a program, if a parent should ask you for advice on a parenting issue or for information on child development; volunteers are asked to bring the Program Director into the discussion.

Phones

Please turn off cell phones during the program.

Infection Control

Standard infection control procedures are followed. These include hand washing techniques (posted in the washrooms) and proper sanitizing procedures for playroom equipment and furniture.

Liability Insurance

Volunteers are covered by St. Andrew's liability insurance policy.

Nut Free Area

The program strives to be a nut free environment. Please do not bring any nut-based products into the playroom.

Screening

To help ensure the safety of children and their families, the volunteers must provide a current Police Record Check. For liability and risk reasons, a volunteer is not to be alone with a child.

Sign-in

Please sign in and out with the Program Director.

Smoking

Our Centre is a non-smoking facility.

Valuables

Please do not bring valuables to the program. Handbags are to be locked in the Volunteer cupboard.



Promoting learning and educational activities

Fostering social development

Encouraging individual growth

Nurturing relationships

Partnering with parents, caregivers and the community