

# SHARED SPACE, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

## GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL-BASED EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

This brief outlines key elements that are included in shared-space guidelines.

Recommendations include information derived from key informant interviews with teachers and early childhood educators who work in shared environments, as well as school and child care systems managers. They are applicable for child care operated by a school or by a third-party provider.

We have attached the guidelines from the Province of Ontario, as well as relevant manuals from the City of Toronto. Also included is a sample agenda used by the Region of Waterloo in its annual start-of-year meetings between school administrators, teachers, and child care providers. These meetings help set expectations and are repeated as needed when new team members join.

Research highlights the crucial role of the school principal in the success of shared-space arrangements. Administrators and educators emphasize that the challenges are primarily relational, and guidelines alone are insufficient. Instead, opportunities for collaboration, two-way dialogue, and co-designing spaces are essential for fostering effective and sustainable shared use.

In addition to reducing transitions for children, an added advantage of shared environments is the potential to combine supply budgets, leading to a better-resourced classroom.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SHARED-SPACE AGREEMENTS

### 1. Clear Roles and Responsibilities

- Define who is responsible for the space during school and child care hours.
- Outline cleaning, setup, and reset responsibilities (e.g., returning materials, furniture placement).

### 2. Access and Security

- Specify access hours for the child care operators.
- Align security protocols with school policies (e.g., key/card access, supervision policies).

### 3. Use of Materials and Equipment

- Clearly list which items can/cannot be shared (e.g., technology, manipulatives, books).
- Set expectations for storage, maintenance, and the repair or replacement of damaged materials.

### 4. Daily Transitions

- Establish a routine for daily setup and cleanup that respects the arrangement of the learning environment for both teachers and early childhood educators.
- Encourage communication to avoid disruption to school instruction or child care programming.

### 5. Health and Safety

- Align child care and school board health and safety policies.
- Meet child care licensing and school board facilities requirements.

### 6. Inclusion and Accessibility

- Ensure shared spaces are inclusive and accessible for all children, including those with disabilities.
- Develop shared strategies for supporting children with additional needs.

### 7. Respect for Pedagogical Approaches

- Acknowledge that both school and child care educators have unique but complementary approaches.
- Encourage mutual understanding and shared goals (e.g., play-based learning, inclusion).
- Ensure mutual understanding of legislative and practice differences (e.g., hygiene—toys may be washed daily in child care programs, but not in school classrooms).

### 8. Communication and Collaboration

- Schedule regular check-ins between the school principal, teachers, and child care operators.
- Provide a mechanism for resolving issues and documenting changes to space use or routines.

# RESOURCES

Working Together: A resource tool for Principals and Supervisors Child Care and Before- and After-School Programs in TDSB Schools. (2023). Early Years, Child Care Services and Toronto District School Board.

Child Care & Before- and After-School Program Resource Manual. Toronto District School Board.

Working Together in a Shared Space (2019-2020). Ministry of Education: Early Years and Child Care Division 2019-2020.

Encl. Child Care and School Partnerships – Meeting agenda



**Waterloo Region  
District School Board**

## **Child Care and School Partnerships**

**Date:**

**School / Community Partner:**

**Time:**

**Participants:**

**Regrets:**

### **Agenda items for discussion**

#### **Welcome & Introductions**

1. Permits and operating dates for Winter and March break camp, and summer camp
  - a. Debrief camp
2. Care plans & sharing of information for children registered in Before & After school programs; medical, allergy conditions.
  - a. Children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten registration in fall
3. Gym and library use and inclement weather
4. Facility Projects
  - a. Summer cleaning
  - b. Work orders closed
  - c. Supplies being provided
5. [Review of WRDSB and Child Care Operator Agreement](#)
  - a. Play materials allocation - timeline/[order form](#)
  - b. Discuss shared space, access to materials, and safe welcome equipment
  - c. Child care, share a copy of the routines
  - d. School share a copy of school rules (gym, code of conduct)
  - e. Facilities - cleaning
  - f. Process for resolving concerns
6. Collaborative Practice, pedagogy / professional development opportunities
7. Frequency of meetings