

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

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CAMBRIDGE Office of Early Childhood

The mission of the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is to **connect** the city's early childhood ecosystem, **align** early childhood services and information, and **advocate** for and **advance** the needs of all young children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is a collaboration supported by the **City of Cambridge** and **Cambridge Public Schools**.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LETTER

4 FOCUS TOPICS

- Habits of Mind
- Self-Care Tips for Early Childhood Educators and Professionals

7 FROM THE FIELD

- Early Years Project (EYP) Article

10 CPP UPDATES

11 NEWS & NOTICES

- Save The Date: 2026 Week of the Young Child

12 OEC WEBSITE

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org

13 OEC TEAM

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org/our-team

14 ABOUT US

earlychildhoodcambridge.org/who-we-are/#about_us



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DR. CHERYL OHLSON

Dear Cambridge Early Childhood Community,

Happy new year! I hope you found some time for rest, relaxation, and family over the holidays, as well as some time for yourself. The start of a new year often brings a sense of renewal, fresh starts, optimism, and possibility. This year, with so much unfolding in the world around us, the new year—like the last—is likely to bring challenges and circumstances that weigh heavily on many within our community and beyond. As educators and programs leaders, you have continued to support and nurture your communities with grace and resilience, and led with compassion and humanity during these times of social uncertainty.

As we step into a new calendar year, we are continuing our newsletter focus on behavioral health, this time with special attention to adult wellness. You'll find discussion and related resources on ways to prioritize and support staff well-being, as well as your own, during challenging times. You'll also find an article that describes the different types of support that the Early Years Project (EYP) provides to children, families, and EEC providers to ensure that all children, including those demonstrating challenging behaviors, to thrive in their preschool environments.

As a reminder, we invite you to help us to support our early childhood community by submitting content for this newsletter. We'd love to hear about strategies and practices that you've implemented successfully, lessons you've learned, and useful resources you've found or developed, so that we can share that information with early childhood professionals across the city through this newsletter. To that end, please let us know if you have something you'd like to share!

We're particularly interested in learning about strong Tier 1 practices that set all children, including those with developmental differences, those who have experienced trauma and those who are displaying challenging behaviors, success in the classroom, and/or Tier 2 or 3 practices that provide more direct support or interventions to individual children. The submission can be anywhere from a brief paragraph / half-page to a full page or so of text, and photos and links to resources are very much welcome! Please feel free to use this [template](#) to help organize your thoughts, if you find it helpful.

If you're interested in—or even just considering—contributing to the newsletter, please complete this brief [Content Submission Form](#).

Warm Regards,

Cheryl Ohlson

Dr. Cheryl Ohlson

Focus Topics

HABITS OF MIND

A new year is often a good time to reflect on how to support best practices and habits of mind in the workplace. Habits of mind refer to “a set of thinking dispositions at the core of social, emotional, and cognitive behaviors.” (source: <http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/frameworks/67/>) One could think of habits of mind as the practices that allow one to do their best work, while burnout interrupts productive and positive workflow. This visual represents the 16 habits of mind, developed by Dr. Arthur L. Costa and Dr. Bena Kallick:



DOWNLOAD THE HABITS OF MIND POSTER HERE.

THE INSTITUTE FOR HABITS OF MIND • www.habitsofmindinstitute.org

In the field of early childhood, it is well understood that burnout is widespread. In thinking about using these 16 habits in the workplace, one must first address the critical question of how to support one another to prevent burnout in the field of early childhood. We want to begin the year by reminding you that the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood is here to support you- particularly in addressing burnout and fatigue.

The common causes of burnout will be of no surprise: emotional labor, high workloads and lack of resources. (source: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/preventing-burnout-in-early-childhood-professionals-practical-self-care-strategies/>) Many early childhood professionals may feel like the causes of burnout are beyond their control. While that may be true at times, there are steps one can take to lower the stressful effects of burnout. The following piece is from Zero to Three to guide programs in supporting each other to prevent burnout in the new year.

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the intentional practice of being fully present in any given moment and approaching it with openness and acceptance.

Mindfulness offers many benefits in managing stress in childcare workers and professionals as well as the children and families they serve. These advantages include:

- Reduced anxiety: This exercise can help regulate the nervous system, promoting the projection of calmness and preventing the triggering of the child's stress response.
- Higher empathy and compassion: This practice enables deeper connections with others, which enhances kindness, empathy, and compassion.

Improved well-being: A recent study reported that participants engaging in mindfulness had a 19.2% larger reduction in depression and a 6.29% improvement in well-being versus the control group.



There are many ways to incorporate mindfulness into daily life. Try the STOP method — stop, take a breath, observe, and proceed. Other tactics to explore include breathing exercises and hand-to-heart meditation.

Seeking peer support

Consider forming a peer support group or establishing individual mentorships to help with stress management in child care settings or clinical interactions. Peers share similar values, understand each other's challenges, and can validate emotions, reducing the feeling of isolation that burnout can create. Connecting also opens the discussion to different perspectives, possible solutions, and practical tips or advice based on experience. Plus, experienced peers can often spot the warning signs of burnout quickly and mobilize support resources before the issue worsens. All create a more positive work environment and support higher job satisfaction.

Setting boundaries

Establishing healthy boundaries prevents burnout by protecting professionals' time and energy. Healthy boundaries also help:

- Prevent overextension or overcommitment.
- Reduce emotional exhaustion and stress.
- Reinforce self-worth and self-respect by promoting the prioritization of well-being.
- Protect enthusiasm for serving babies, toddlers, and their families.

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS (CONT.)

Self-reflection is the ideal starting point for mental health support for educators and clinicians. It improves self-awareness and forces consideration of the reasons behind individual feelings and actions. Consider options like reflective journaling and peer reflection for deeper exploration. These [reflective practice exercises](#) allow professionals to acknowledge their challenges, identify areas they can control, and practice new responses.

Workplace Policies for Support

Supportive workplaces empower a culture that prioritizes well-being — reducing burnout and providing an environment where professionals can thrive.

Reflective Supervision

Reflective supervision is a relationship-based approach to skills enhancement that supports capabilities to serve infants, young children, and their families. The [technique involves regular reflection](#), collaboration, and analysis to build more effective working relationships between all parties.

During these exchanges, professionals can openly discuss their feelings, challenges, and experiences with their supervisors for feedback, advice, and support. Supervisors can also recognize potential symptoms of burnout and encourage well-being strategies. Incorporate this practice by being active in regular interactions and engaging in open, honest communication.

Ensure Adequate Time for Breaks

Whenever possible, give staff regular opportunities to pause and recharge — even a few minutes away can make a meaningful difference in reducing burnout.

Many states require a 30-minute break for employees scheduled to work more than 5 or 6 consecutive hours. However, some child care centers, particularly family child care educators who usually work alone, may have exceptions or different requirements.

Professional Development Opportunities

Early childhood service is a dynamic field that continues evolving as research and knowledge expand. As a result, it's critical for ECE professionals to stay up to date and improve their abilities.

Comprehensive professional development opportunities are the [ideal solution for enhancing competencies](#) and skills. Training also contributes to feelings of accomplishment and growth, boosting job satisfaction and keeping burnout at bay. There are many formats to accommodate differing learning styles, and researching [available training opportunities](#) helps ensure they meet unique needs for various skill levels.

Resources From:

[Zero to Three](#) | [Habits of Mind](#)

From The Field



A program of Riverside Community Care, the Early Years Project (EYP) welcomes referrals from all Early Education and Care (EEC) providers in the city of Cambridge, those who do not participate in the Cambridge Preschool Program (CPP), and those that do. EYP Child Developmental Specialists are all experienced EEC teachers with additional training in promoting relational safety and resilience. Offering child specific and general classroom consults in infant, toddler, preschool, pre-K, and multi-age classrooms, we address concerns such as behavioral dysregulation, developmental delays, and possible neurodivergence. We are also available for a check-in with a Child Developmental Specialist, staff and parent workshops, and access to supports and resources for families and staff when there have been major stressors such as death, accidents, and catastrophes.

For classrooms that do not have CPP placements, contact EYP directly:

617-702-5816; eyp@riversidecc.org

For classrooms with CPP placements, contact OEC, who determines if a referral will be made to EYP:

857.235.2265; jarmenta@partnerof.cpsd.us

What is the difference between CPP coaching and EYP consultations?

For a general classroom consultation, the work is similar. EYP also provides child specific consultations and direct support to families while CPP does not. In this article the focus will be on child specific consultations.

The Heart of EYP

The EYP process is rooted in curiosity. Our primary focus is on strengthening regulation, social-emotional literacy, and the trust between children and teachers. We learn about the child through discussions with teachers and parents, classroom observations, and interaction with the child. Together, we consider what the child brings and what their experience is, how the interaction between the child and the environment is causing the child stress, what skills the child still needs to learn for them to successfully navigate the classroom, and the best way for teachers to scaffold experiences for and teach the child needed skills.

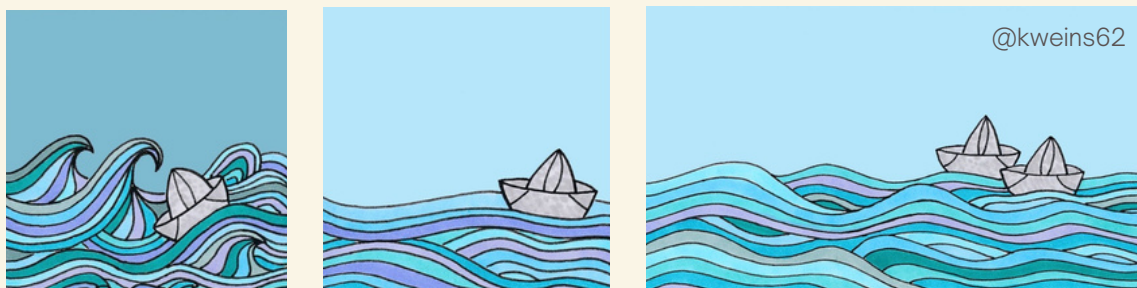


Self-regulation is the ability to manage our emotions and behavior in ways that lead to positive relationships and learning. This ability is a complex and ongoing process, which only occurs when our stress response system is effectively managing stress.

Self-regulation develops from experiences with co-regulation.

To find the stressors the child might be reacting to we assess the environment: the physical space from the lights and noise level to the overall layout; the structure of the day including routines and transitions; classroom activities; clarity and appropriateness of expectations, boundaries, and follow through; the amount of time spent outside; opportunities for gross motor movement; the way adults speak to children, including the words spoken and the tone; teaching team dynamics; and the ability of caregivers to co-regulate when they are under stress.

Co-regulation



When their storm meets our calm

EYP works with parents in whatever way they find useful. We provide a listening ear and work to create open and supportive discussions between all parties as we strive for a holistic, shared understanding of the child and their needs. We are available to parents and guardians for in person, virtual, and phone meetings with ongoing email and text communications depending on their preference. As needed, we also provide resources, referrals for other services, and support for families through the referral process.

A Process of Change: Continual Learning

The EYP Child Development Specialist writes an Assessment from what is learned, which is a snapshot in time. In collaboration with the teaching team and family, we create a Support Plan to reduce stressors and nurture skills. The Support Plan is a living document, updated over time, which includes goals for the child, teachers, and sometimes home. EYP supports the change process through observation, listening, modeling, and in-the-moment coaching with teachers. Our role is not to function as one-on-one support or an extra teacher in the classroom, but to help the teachers and center to best support the child's and classroom's needs. A critical component of the change process is time for EYP and the teaching team to meet on a regular basis outside of the classroom. It is hard work to change behavioral and classroom practices. Teachers need time to reflect, process their emotions, celebrate goals met, and plan.



“See a child differently; you see a different child.”

-Dr. Stuart Shanker

Intensive Services

In the past year EYP began to offer intensive services to prevent expulsions and better meet the needs of children who are experiencing such extreme dysregulation that there are safety risks to self, other children, and adults. This level of service is rare and triggers Expulsion Prevention Meetings between EYP, OEC and the center. In the past year EYP has provided the intensive model of services to three children.

Profound dysregulation can occur for many reasons, but the underlying mechanism is a stress response system in overdrive. This activated stress response spreads between the child, teachers, parents, classroom, and administrators. Whenever people are getting hurt it is an incredibly difficult situation. For the child, the parent who is worried about their child and needs childcare to work, other children in the classroom and their families, and the teachers who are doing everything they know to do.

As with most EYP child-specific consults, a major component of the intensive model is supporting teachers to:

- balance flexibility with clear expectations
- maintain consistent, kind, and firm boundaries
- provide the child adequate time for gross motor movement
- help the child recognize and communicate their emotions and regulatory needs (movement, headphones, sensory toy)
- coach the child through social interactions with peers

In the beginning, EYP is on-site daily. Hours vary depending on the level of need and EYP availability. Over time, teachers learn to read the child’s subtle cues and new routines, practices, and activities become the norm. As teachers embody new teaching and relational skills, the classroom better meets the child’s needs. The child’s sense of safety and trust grows and they become increasingly regulated. They still may have greater needs than other children and there will be ups and downs, but the overall arc is one of progress. EYP then fades into an observational and coaching role. Visits decrease to bi-weekly or monthly check-ins until it is mutually decided that EYP is no longer needed.

“In the beginning it was exhausting trying to read her cues and figure out what to do. After a while I just knew how to respond without thinking about it.”

-Teacher supported in an intensive consult by EYP

Cambridge Preschool Program Updates



The Cambridge Preschool Program

is a publicly-funded program that provides

access to free, high-quality early education and care

for all Cambridge 4 year-olds and some 3 year-olds for a

school-day, school-year

placement. There are additional costs for

full-day, full-year

(including summer) programs for some families. Families apply to CPP through a

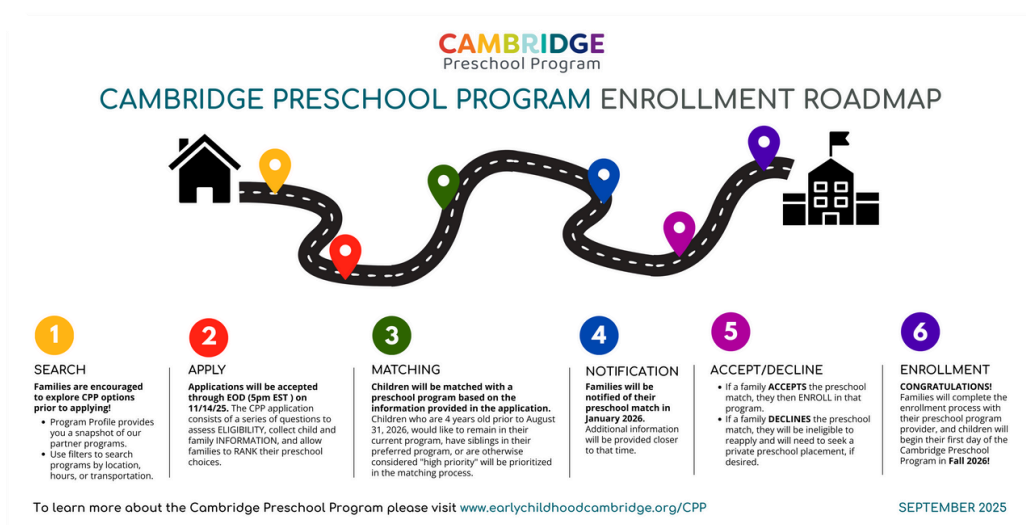
single, centralized online application.

CAMBRIDGE Preschool Program

Cambridge Preschool Program Enrollment Timeline

Please review the enrollment timeline below for next steps in the application process:

- Application Window #1: October 1 – November 14, 2025
- **Families who applied by the November 14th deadline will receive notification of their preschool matches in January 2026.**
- Families will have 2 weeks from notification to accept or decline their placement.
- Children will begin their first day of CPP in September 2026!
- Application Window #2: Spring 2026. Dates to be announced.



News & Notices

Save the Date!

MANY HANDS, ONE COMMUNITY



Caring Together for Young Children & Families

**6TH ANNUAL CAMBRIDGE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD, APRIL 11-17TH**

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE | SATURDAY, APRIL 11TH

CAMBRIDGE
Office of Early Childhood



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Find Us Here!

Or save the url below:

www.facebook.com/cambridgeoec

Thank you for supporting our office!



**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**



**Click HERE to read the latest
CFF Newsletter!**



Inside you'll find information about a wide variety of resources and programs such as:

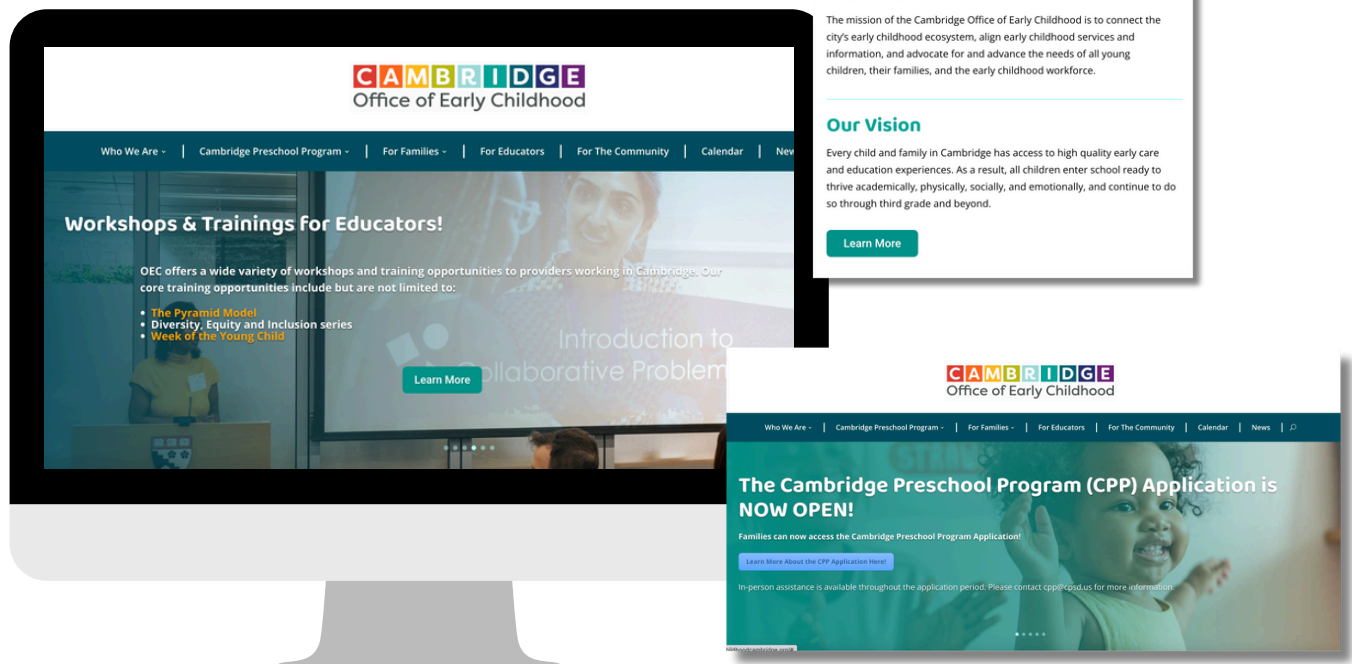
- Cambridge Dads
- Parent/Child Activities
- Parent support
- Free resource bags for families
- Resources & supports for families and more!

Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

OEC WEBSITE

**Need information on all things Early Childhood in Cambridge?
Visit the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood website!**

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org



What Information Can I Learn From The OEC Website?

www.earlychildhoodcambridge.org is a one-stop-shop for the Cambridge community to access information and resources related to early childhood education and programs. The new website culminates a rebranding process for the Office of Early Childhood, formerly known as the Cambridge Birth to 3rd Grade Partnership.

The website includes but is not limited to:

- About Us & Contacts
- Announcements & Events
- The Cambridge Preschool Program
- Career Pathways
- Child Care Resources
- COEC Contact Information
- Collaborating Organizations
- CPS Programs
- Early Learning & School Readiness
- Educator Resources
- Paying For Childcare
- Preschool Scholarships
- Professional Development
- Program Quality Improvement
- Publications
- Research & Evaluation
- Workshops & Trainings

Cambridge Office of Early Childhood



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Cambridge Office of Early Childhood

ABOUT US

The Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is a collaborative office whose work and team are shared jointly by the City of Cambridge and Cambridge Public Schools.

Our Mission

The mission of the Cambridge Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is to **connect** the city's early childhood ecosystem, **align** early childhood services and information, and **advocate** for and **advance** the needs of all young children, their families, and the early childhood workforce.

Our Vision

Every child and family in Cambridge has access to high-quality early care and education experiences. As a result, all children enter school ready to thrive academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, and continue to do so through third grade and beyond.

Our Commitment To Equity

All children have the right to equitable early childhood experiences that enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators and family support staff have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable opportunities for children and their families. (Adapted from NAEYC's Position Statement on Advancing Equity)

CAMBRIDGE
Office of Early Childhood

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