



PLAY sense

PARENT MANUAL





2

Education is not the filling of a pail
but the lighting of a fire

– William Butler Yeats

CONTENTS

- 4 Introduction to the program
- 6 Your toddler
- 14 The Play Sense mandate
- 15 The principles of Play Sense
- 16 Conducting the program
- 18 Teaching methods
- 21 Equipping and running the program

3



INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

As your toddler approaches their second birthday, you may, like many parents start to feel the need to enrol him/her in a program outside of home. This happens for a combination of reasons. You may be going back to work or you may be expecting another baby or you may simply feel you need a little time to exercise and do chores. In addition, many parents feel their toddler needs some social interaction or extra stimulation that is not being optimally provided by them or a nanny in the home. These concerns bring about the need to have a childcare option for at least 3 mornings a week.

As you explore the various childcare options available, you will come across two distinct possibilities – the more expensive offering of a trained au pair in your home versus the typical daycare or nursery school environment. The private au pair option is not only out of the reach of many parents financially, but also does not solve the issue of socialization that you are acutely aware your little one needs. As you do your research into playgroups, you may find your mind preoccupied with the concerns over quality of care as well as whether your little one's individual needs and personality can be adequately catered for in a large group.

While the crèche or nursery school environment suits some moms and their children, others justifiably feel that the number of children and the style of education in nursery schools is simply too much too soon for their toddlers. If you are not satisfied with the idea of your toddler having to fit into a schedule that incorporates 10 children in a group (and often more) and a schedule that does not allow for individual differences, you may feel increasingly unsettled as you go from facility to facility.

Play Sense is a program designed for just these reasons and with these families in mind.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Play Sense is an innovative solution, providing the best of all worlds at a cost comparable to a good quality playschool environment.

The program is for children between the ages of 2 and 4 years old. These children are often ready for social interaction and some stimulation but are too young to fit happily into a large playgroup facility.

It is for parents who are looking for a bridge between the familiar comforts of home and the preschool environment that the four turning five year old is expected to attend (and is usually ready for).

HOW IS IT RUN?

Play Sense is a program designed by two Occupational Therapists with a passion for young children's development and practical solutions for millennial parents.

The program is led in a home by a fully trained therapist or teacher who is further trained in the Play Sense program.

The group consists of up to six two-to-four year olds. The children join the program as **close to their second birthday** as possible and continue until the **end of the year that they turn four**.

The program is carried out in the most **suitable home environment** of one of the children. The other children attend the program in that home.

The group runs as a 3 ½ hour program, three to five days a week. The children generally start three times a week and progress to daily by the end of the second quarter.

The teacher is trained by Meg Faure and Lara Schoenfeld and has a franchise or membership for the Play Sense program. She follows a specially designed curriculum and is required to maintain a high standard of equipment and knowledge by receiving in-service training and quarterly updates.



YOUR TODDLER

WHY PLAY SENSE

We have a limited idea of the future in which our children will play. We do know for certain that the foundations laid down in the first 1000 days of childhood have critical long-term effects on our children's success.

Many important skills can be taught effectively during childhood, adolescence and even into adulthood. What cannot be taught and yet are more critical than 'skills' are soft skills. Creativity, collaboration, the ability to self-regulate and to think critically and plan (executive function) are the soft skills of the future. While skills like science, maths and engineering can be taught in formal education and later in childhood, the child's brain is primed to develop soft skills very early on. If opportunities are missed it becomes exceptionally difficult to impart these competences. Your toddler is at a critical point in their learning journey – ripe to develop soft skills as the basis for long term learning and education.

The Play Sense curriculum uses imaginary play and guided play to ensure optimal opportunities to develop these soft skills.

Each new stage of parenting brings with it new goals and new challenges. The toddler period is no different. Toddlers are working at establishing autonomy and mastery of their world. By understanding your toddler, you will gain an appreciation of your toddler's behaviour and the tasks of the toddler years. This insight will alter your child's development and turn a potentially thorny time into a wonderful celebration of your toddler's emerging self-esteem and mastery of the world.

This is the basis on which all Play Sense groups are run. By appreciating the goals and challenges of the two-to-four year old, we can nurture them in a way that will alter their education journey and ultimate success from the get go.

The main capacities that a child of this age should be developing are:

1. Emotional regulation
2. Social skills
3. 'Super Sensory' capacities
4. Executive function
5. Developmental milestones



EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Self-regulation and the ability to manage one's own behaviour is a primary task that the toddler needs to master.

Self-regulation develops on a trajectory – in the first few months of a baby's life, physiological regulation (of heartbeat, temperature and appetite) emerges. In the next few months, regulation of mood emerges – your little baby cried less and was happy with stimulation. The older baby regulates their sleep and learns to settle independently. It is in the toddler years that your little one learns to regulate their

emotions and behaviour. It is this self-regulation of emotions and behaviour that has been found to be one of the greatest predictors of academic success and of resilience in life. What does it mean?

Emotional regulation is the ability to regulate one's emotions by:

- Recognizing and reflecting on one's own feelings and having a strong identity or sense of self.
- Recognising the feelings and intent of others and adjusting one's own emotions and behaviour in this context.
- Connecting one's emotions to what is happening in the world and the internal state of others.
- Controlling behaviour by communicating feelings and managing impulses so that one can behave in a way that allows for learning, socialisation and general function.

Toddlers learn this emotional regulation when they are cared for in an empathetic manner and given words for how they feel (narrative). A caring adult must co-regulate with the toddler – it's a dance of managing behaviour and difficult emotions in a caring and empathetic way.

Nurturing toddlers with both narrative and co-regulation, forms the basis for emerging emotional regulation and is best achieved in a small group setting with a skilled and caring teacher or parent. Your nanny's role is also recognised in this transition and in discussion with the other parents in the group, may attend the group until your little one settles.



SOCIAL SKILLS

We are social creatures and almost all facets of life require us to connect with others and work together. Being socially attuned is central to happiness and to success in life.

The toddler years are a pivotal point in the development of socialisation. Once your toddler feels connected, safe, valued and has a sense of belonging and can regulate their emotions they begin to appreciate the emotional state of another. This forms the basis for care, empathy and respect for others.

Being a member of society involves not only caring for our friends but also having a heart for the environment, society and the world around us. The Play Sense program connects little ones to others and their world in a way that produces community players – kids who think beyond themselves.





EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

No education program would be complete without addressing the skill of executive function – the ability to plan, reason, apply judgement and achieve a goal. Executive function is like the CEO of the brain – it is in charge of making sure things get done – from the idea, through the planning stages of a task to the final deadline.¹

The critical elements of executive function are:

- Attention
- Decision making
- Judgement
- Deductive reasoning
- Critical thinking
- Inhibition
- Working memory
- Flexibility
- Problem solving



DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

The more obvious measures of your toddler's abilities will be the areas that are classically part of a playgroup curriculum:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Language
- Cognitive skills such as numeracy, visual perception, memory, etc.
- Daily activities such as potty training, snack preparation and tidying up

These skills are easily measured and are the visible outcome of the underlying foundations of sensory-motor processing, emotional and social capacity, 'Super Sensory' capacity and executive function.



'SUPER SENSORY' CAPACITIES

When looking at the key capacities for academic achievement, one cannot ignore those magic elements – the intangibles - that set one child apart from the next.

We have called these capacities the 'Super Senses'.

They include:

- Creativity
- Imagination
- Love for learning
- Resourcefulness
- Engagement in tasks
- Volition or the will to do
- A sense of self efficacy and drive

Yeats said "*Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire*". This is the foundation of Play Sense – it is a program that inspires little ones, makes learning fun and ignites the fire – nurturing the 'Super Senses', which will become the foundation of a life-long journey of learning (Hirsh-Pasek, et al, 2009).



GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

The emerging motor milestones of infancy are obvious – your little one progresses from lying to rolling to crawling to walking well in the space of 18 short months. The changes in the two-to-four year old are subtle and more about quality of movement. Your toddler will go from stiff robot-like movements and clumsy running to more smooth and coordinated movements. Running, the ability to stop quickly and run accurately without bumping into things are refined. This is the year for refining balance and coordinated movement.

It is exhausting to be around a very busy toddler but it is all this movement that builds up muscle tone, enhances balance reactions, encourages coordination of both sides of the body and generates feedback from their body. These foundations for coordinated movement best emerge when sedentary activities such as reading books and doing puzzles are balanced with good periods of active play.

An important milestone of the third year of life is motor planning; this is when your child starts to plan ways to use his/her body and tools to achieve his/her goals. A simple example of this is positioning a chair onto which to climb, in order to reach higher for an object one needs.

Ball skills develop rapidly this year and the toddler loves to throw a ball overhead and starts to go from just walking into a ball to actually kicking it. Your two-to-three year old starts to jump well with two feet off the ground and propels a bike with feet on ground (scooter bike). The two-to-three year old loves to dance and will develop lots of movements and balance in this way.

Your toddler is also challenging him/herself to climb, use monkey bars, swing upside down, lift heavy objects and do roly-polys. Its a busy time for gross motor skills!



FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Using their hands to control the world is a feature of this stage. The foundation of good fine motor skill, which emerges now, is stability in the body and shoulders. This develops from gross motor play, which is really the priority now. Stability in the wrist and hand also develop at this stage and activities focus on this process rather than actual fine motor skills of drawing, threading and cutting. While all the foundations of fine motor control are being developed, we see changes in how gently your toddler turns the pages of books, how they master the use of stickers – peeling and sticking – and threading of beads. Other foundations such as building towers out of blocks and the way in which he/she hold a crayon are also indicators of fine motor control emerging.

This year hand preference will start to emerge, however dominance is only fully established a little later. Towards the end of the year your child will start to cut with scissors.

LANGUAGE

Unlike motor development, which seems to progress at a fairly steady rate, speech usually happens in spurts or leaps and bounds. During the third year, a phenomenon known as the 'language explosion' is evident in most children. What is totally variable is just when you will see this spurt. For some children this rapid expansion of vocabulary happens as early as eighteen months, while for another child it may only occur closer to the third birthday.

During this year your child will go from using single words to linking them into complex sentences with meaning. Your child will start to talk to him/herself in monologues that aren't easily understood by every one.

Interestingly, we find that as children are exposed to other children, the development of language is encouraged.

Responding to verbal cues and instructions (receptive language) is essential and precedes expressive language by around 8 months.

Language explosion is accompanied by and often facilitated by a fascination with books and stories. At this age, more than any other, your child will love to sit and be read to. We encourage this fascination with books by having a book sharing program and story time each day with new and familiar books.



COGNITIVE

Body and self concept

By two years old children can not only recognize themselves in the mirror but identify who they are in a family photo. Your little one also gains an awareness of some basic parts of his/her body. This body awareness is crucial later on for motor planning and spatial awareness.

Memory

As memory develops in the two-to-three year old, your child will surprise you with his/her understanding of routines and what comes next and his/her enjoyment of the familiar. Your child will love to read a book over and over as he/she remembers how it will end and enjoys that knowledge.

Memory plus cause and effect allow for anticipation of what the outcome will be and is the basis of planning.

Similar and different

Perceptually your child develops the concept of 'same and different'. This skill begins with realizing that a horse is different to a cow and that red is different to blue. Knowing when something is different is important as a basis for all other basic concepts such as colour, form and space.

Colour, size, shape and number concepts

Basic concept development establishes during this year and it is a case of being exposed to the basic concepts that is important. During this period your child will begin to sort objects by colour. And towards the end of the year will be able to name one or more colours.

By three years old your child will be able to do a four-piece puzzle and enjoys many types of shape sorters and form boards. He/she learns size concept and can point to big or small and sort objects in order of size.

During this year, your child learns to rote count to five or more and counts at least two objects.

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Potty training

For most children this is the year in which **toilet training** occurs. The first step is developing awareness that something is about to 'come out' and then need to go to the toilet. This is usually well established by two years old. Also important by two years old is an awareness of the toilet and how we sit or stand and how to flush it. It is the control of the bladder and bowel that is achieved during the two to three period.

We recognize that the responsibility for toilet training your child will be ours during the times of the day he/she is in the teacher's care. The best approach to toilet training is a low-key approach, which starts with interest in toileting, experiencing sitting on the toilet and then positive reinforcement for success on the toilet. Regular toilet times, incorporated into the daily routine and watching other children's success also aids in the process.



Cleanliness and hygiene

This is another area of focus for the two-to-three year old. Hand washing and manners are incorporated into the program.

Sleep

Sleep is still very important for your toddler and without it happy play dissolves into tears, tantrums and frustrations. Eleven to twelve hours at night is still essential. Furthermore, a power nap in the day is still needed until well after the third birthday. Without a good night's sleep and around an hour's midday nap, your toddler will become irritable and will not benefit from his/her interactions with the world.

Toddlers do push boundaries and sleep is one that toddlers are notorious for negotiating. The best way to manage sleep is to create a non-negotiable routine around where and when sleeps happen – especially the midday sleep and bedtime. Day sleeps are not part of the Play Sense program because we believe that the routine of a day sleep at home, in an environment where you are setting the boundaries is critical.

Preparing food

Part of developing independence and good eating habits is making snacks and baking. Preparing their own food gives children an enormous feeling of success and is part of the Play Sense program. Eating is a social event but one in which there are boundaries and norms and learning social eating at a young age is important. The children eat the snack they prepared together and enjoy the time together.

Understanding the developmental tasks of the two-to-three year old helps us to create the expected outcomes for your child in the Play Sense program.



THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY SENSE

We believe that the goals of the Play Sense program are best achieved with the following principles:

Home based

By meeting the social and emotional needs of the two-to-four year old through home based education. This small group interaction (no more than a ratio of one carer to six children) allows for bridging between the one on one focused care of the first two years of life and the 'busyness' of preschool.

Free play

By creating opportunities for free, unstructured playtime to enhance the Super Senses: motivation, participation, creativity, engagement and agency as well as delight and attention.

Guided play

By guiding play in a meaningful context through the use of toys and activities, themes and scripts timed appropriately to scaffold development and executive function.

Social learning

By creating a social milieu of similar aged children with a teacher who is passionate about developing relationships through play and social engagement.

Play plans

By using stage appropriate Play Plans (activities and tasks) to meet the toddler's developmental needs.

Sensory diet

By using an individualised sensory diet, specific to your child's unique sensory profile, to ensure engagement in an optimal zone of arousal for engagement.

Learning journey

By acknowledging that process is as important as outcome.

THE PLAY SENSE MANDATE

Bearing in mind the critical foundations that emerge between two and three years old, Play Sense is based on a mandate, principles and curriculum that scaffold development.

At Play Sense we commit to prioritising your child's development with the following goals in mind:

1. To develop emotional regulation so that the toddler will be able to identify, name and reflect on their own and others' feelings and be able to self regulate behaviour in the context of these emotions.
2. To cultivate social human beings who contribute meaningfully to their world and who are connected with people and the environment.
3. To nurture the 'Super Senses' - inspiring little ones to be intrinsically motivated to explore, master and learn from their world.
4. To develop engaged learners who achieve their goals through play by planning, problem solving and creative solutions.
5. To achieve the measurable goals of toddlerhood in the areas of daily tasks, motor, language and perceptual skills.

CONDUCTING THE PROGRAM

JOINING A PLAY SENSE GROUP

Our online marketplace allows parents to choose a group close to their home with similar aged children.

Here are a few criteria to keep in mind as you choose your Play Sense group:

- 1. Age** – The children may start around their second birthday or later in that year and may continue until the end of the year they turn four. An age gap of up to 11 months between the oldest and youngest child may be accommodated. Like siblings, the older children gain confidence through being more accomplished and in turn scaffold and encourage the younger children's play. Depending when and at what age your child joins Play Sense, he/she can stay for a three year period.
- 2. Geographical area** – Try to choose a group within your geographical area so that your little one does not have to travel too far to get to the location. This is important for little ones as starting the day with a long journey is tiring and not ideal.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOCATION

The concept of a bridging year between home and school means that the optimal Play Sense location is in one of the children's home. The following criteria will guide us in choosing the right Play Sense Host Home:

- 1. The Host Home** – The space can be an outside room, a single garage (that fulfills the criteria), or a playroom in the Host Home. If it is inside the house it needs to be a child friendly room and a household where children can play freely without being inhibited. It must also be a room where other family members who may work from home or be there during the day will not be disturbed. A relaxed host mom helps the other moms to feel accepted and part of the planning and running of the group.
- 2. Size** – The room must be a minimum of 3m by 4m
- 3. Windows** – The room must have good ventilation in the form of a window and a door to the outside.
- 4. Toilet** – The children must have access to a toilet with basin, as this is the year in which potty training will be mastered.
- 5. Kitchen** – It is preferable but not essential to have access to a kitchen. Since snack making is part of the program, it can be done in the playroom as opposed to a kitchen. However a kitchen may be used for certain activities in the program, such as baking.
- 6. Garden** – An outdoor area is essential for gross motor and free play, which forms part of the daily program.
- 7. Swimming pool** – If there is a swimming pool on the property, it is the responsibility of the host family to ensure it is secured and cannot be accessed at anytime during the Play Sense

hours. A pool cover and fence is preferable and a lock on the fence is essential. There is never a time in the program that the pool will be used.

- 8. Gate** – The property must be secure from roads and a fence and locked gate are needed.
- 9. Pets** – Due to allergies and risk of a grumpy dog biting a child, all pets must be separate from the Play Sense area at all times. If the curriculum calls for interaction with pets or other animals, the teacher will consult with the parents and gain their consent for interacting with animals.
- 10. Shelves** – The room must preferably have an area of shelves or a special corner where program equipment can be stored from day to day. Sometimes this is not possible, if the venue is a family's playroom or TV room. In this case the teacher is responsible for keeping the Play Kit with all the daily equipment. It is part of her training to keep just such a box.

11. Carpet – A carpet, mat, cushions or adequate floor covering is preferable for ring and story time, when the children will be sitting on the floor. Alternately each child can bring a cushion from home.

12. Heating – During winter a safe heater or wall panel may be needed in rooms that are too cold for the comfort of the children.

THE RIGHT TEACHER

Part of the service of the Play Sense program is to train and support your wonderful Play Sense teacher. The following process is followed to ensure you have the right person for your group:

1. The individual can only apply for a Play Sense franchise if she has had a basic training in Occupational Therapy or teaching or an equivalent program.
2. She applies to Play Sense and is interviewed and screened by one of the Play Sense management team.
3. If she is accepted onto the program she is trained in the Play Sense curriculum over a course of formal lectures and hands-on practical training. All teachers receive additional quarterly training.
4. She will be provided with the basic equipment for the running of the program – the Play Kit.



TEACHING METHODS

The training

In addition to her OT or teaching qualification, each Play Sense teacher is required to undergo training in the Play Sense methodology. This training consists of more than thirty hours of lectures on the Play Sense program, during which we go through the teachers' manual and syllabus. Thereafter the teacher is required to do a minimum of 6 days of practical experience in an established Play Sense group. In addition she receives first aid training.

The teacher has to submit an assignment after six months of teaching. After one year of teaching in a Play Sense group, she submits a teaching portfolio.

Once a quarter the Play Sense teacher is required to attend a continuing education group where she is updated on new ideas. She has monthly support meetings which act as a staffroom for sharing ideas, joys and challenges.

The techniques

The Play Sense program was designed specifically to meet the needs of children in this age group, on all levels. The focus is on language development, socialization, creativity, building a healthy self-esteem and learning through play. It is important that the children enjoy their time at playgroup, as the more fun they have the more they learn in the process.

The daily program

The groups are run according to a flexible daily program, which is introduced gradually over a few weeks. The routine balances active and passive activities and takes into account special needs such as nappy changing, toilet training, etc. The basic program is as follows:

08h30 – 08h45	Settling in and book sharing with caregiver
08h45 – 09h00	Story, music and movement
09h00 – 09h30	Art
09h30 – 10h00	Sensory play
10h00 – 10h15	Snack
10h15 – 11h00	Outdoor play
11h00 – 11h45	Imaginary play plan
11h45 – 12h00	Book time and reflection

We start the day with an essential transition time of 15 minutes of book sharing, in which a parent sits with his/her little one and engages in book sharing. This time facilitates separation and also teaches a valuable skill of book sharing, which has been shown to enrich all areas of academic foundations. Your nanny can take part in this if she drops off your child.

Indoor play includes plenty of fine motor activities, cognitive games, fantasy play and real life activities such as preparing snacks and baking. Outdoor play includes ball games, sand and water play and the use of equipment such as swings, a jungle gym, slide, hula hoops, bikes, etc.

DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

Acknowledging that the toddler has to develop autonomy and harsh parenting or discipline can create doubt, it is a vital time to discipline children constructively, with care. Applying rules and chasing down every issue is counterproductive with toddlers. Many of the issues we label as 'negative toddler behaviour' is related to one of five things:

1. **Pushing boundaries**
2. **A need to explore and experiment with the world**
3. **Expressing autonomy**
4. **Misunderstanding**
5. **Frustration**

Each needs to be dealt with in a different way:

Pushing boundaries – There is no debate that toddlers do better with clear and firm boundaries. Boundaries make little ones feel secure. Research has shown that toddlers learn more and experiment more within boundaries than when there are no boundaries at all. So having clear limits is vital. That said we know that toddlers will push boundaries to ascertain what the limit is. Being consistent with boundaries is a vital part of constructive caregiving. At Play Sense there are clear boundaries that will be instilled and they revolve around the 'Health and Safety' issues. A toddler may not behave in a way that:

- **Harms themselves** – e.g. scissors in a plughole
- **Harms others** – e.g. biting a friend
- **Hurts other people's feelings** – e.g. not sharing

Exploration – Many so called mischievous issues, such as putting toys into the toilet, pouring glue on the floor or sticking scissors in a plughole are simply ways in which toddlers are experimenting with the world. Before responding to behaviour a caring adult needs to identify the toddler's intentions, make allowances for some behaviours (even if they create mess) or create other options that will be as exciting such as water play in a basin instead of a toilet bowl.



Expressing autonomy – Power battles are not constructive for two reasons – firstly they remove all autonomy from the toddler and secondly you will not always win and emotional damage can be done through fighting every issue. So rather choose your battles before making blanket rules and challenging all negative behaviours. Rather seek to help the toddler to feel like he/she has some autonomy and can make some decisions and have some control – we do this through creating a boundary with reasonable choices for the toddler to make (see ABC approach below).

Misunderstanding – Because internal thoughts and receptive language develop ahead of expressive language, many toddler behaviours are related to feeling misunderstood. At Play Sense we start any behaviour management with acknowledging what the toddler wants so they feel understood. We only then go on to enforce the boundary.

Frustration – Negative behaviours such as biting, tantrums and breaking things are often due to frustrations. Frustrations develop out of misunderstandings but can also be exacerbated by hunger, tiredness and overstimulation. Reading a child's signals for fatigue and knowing their sensory personality will help us to avert overstimulation and tiredness. This is the reason for identifying the sensory profile of each child and is also the reason that Play Sense is only 3 - 3 ½ hours long. That is enough time for a two-to-three year old to be expected to socialise without a negative incident arising.

DISCIPLINE METHOD

In the Play Sense program, when negative behaviours arise, it will be noted in the context of these 5 reasons. Thereafter an ABC approach will be used.

The teacher will look the child in the eyes and say three things:

- A.** Acknowledge what the toddler wants so that he/she feels understood: "I know you want to stay on the swing now and not share it with Mary, and I would also want to stay on the swing if I were you, its fun"
- B.** Boundary will be given. The teacher will be firm and consistent about boundaries that have to be instilled: "But we have to share – it's the rules of this playground and you have had your turn."
- C.** Choice will be given so that the little one feels he/she has some control: "So you can't stay on the swing but you can choose – do you want to go on the slide or push Mary while she is on the swing?"

The focus is on positive reinforcement and leading by example. Occasionally a little one may need time away from other children and we adopt the time-out approach, whereby the child sits quietly on a cushion in the classroom for a maximum of one minute per year of age, e.g. 2 minutes for a two-year old child. Time-out is not used as a punishment, but rather as a cooling-off period when a little one is overwhelmed or over stimulated by a situation.

Fortunately we very rarely need to use time-out, because due to the small size of the group, the teacher can pre-empt most conflict situations.

THE CURRICULUM

We have compiled a comprehensive curriculum, which covers a year's worth of activities. The curriculum is divided into themes, as themes spark interest, which is the building block for attention. The curriculum is accessed through an online portal and includes extension ideas for the teacher to use with older toddlers if they are continuing into the year after they turn three or four. We provide book recommendations for each theme, which the teacher can borrow from their local library. The syllabus includes creative activities using mediums such as paint, crayons, Koki's, material, glue, paper mache and many more.

The children learn how to tear paper with their fingers before being taught how to use scissors later on in the year.

Each teacher will adapt the syllabus to suit the individual needs of the group. It is meant to serve as a teaching aid for the teacher and she is encouraged to use her own creative flair and expertise as much as possible. Above all, the syllabus is designed to ensure that little ones learn and grow as much as possible, while having loads of fun in the process!

Assessment

Development in the two-to-four year old is highly individual. Skills emerge in a unique manner and in their own time, with exposure to opportunities. At Play Sense we strongly believe that assessment of capacities and skills is not the focus in the program. Instead, assessment is used to ensure the program meets the unique personality and engagement style of the child. Through the process of assessment, the teacher gains insights that alter the way she manages behaviour and ignites the individual child's 'drive'.

The following assessments are conducted

Quarter 1 – Sensory Personality and approach to life

Quarter 2 – Play Skills and Playfulness

Quarter 3 – Self-regulation emergence

Graduation – Developmental Checklist

Tell your teacher if you would prefer that no assessments be conducted with your child – your teacher will anyway have a good sense of your little one.

EQUIPPING AND RUNNING THE PROGRAM

Equipment

The Play Sense teacher is responsible for providing the Play Kit – a comprehensive selection of toys and tools needed for the program.

Families are encouraged to provide extra toys, puzzles and games as they see fit. They may rotate certain toys into the group or the host family may be happy to have their child's toys used. The Play Sense teacher is responsible for the care of these toys and games.

Consumables, tissues and toilet paper

At the start of the school year, parents will be asked to supply the following:

- 1 box of tissues • 6 toilet rolls • 1 sun cream • 1 stick of glue • Child-sized scissors
- 1 box of crayons biggest size • 9 big kokis • Painting overall or apron – available to purchase from Play Sense

Your teacher may request extras such as egg boxes, newspaper and magazines when needed. If there are irregular expenses in a month – e.g. baking goodies or posters, the parents will be consulted ahead of the month for consent and billed at the end of the month.



YOUR SCHOOL

The program allows for some flexibility with the following guidelines in mind:

- **Hours:** Toddlers cannot manage long days and need to sleep over lunchtime. Their endurance for socialization is short and behaviour challenges are more likely to occur if your toddler is tired or over stimulated. Their concentration spans are also limited and they need to have longer periods of unstructured play. The optimal 'school' day is therefore from 8:30am to 12:00pm or 8am to 11:30am.
- **Frequency:** Most groups start at 3 days and increase to 5 days over the course of the year. New children generally start on three days, even if the group runs daily. If a host mom wants to limit the number of days, she needs to make all the parents aware of this at the parent's meeting.
- **Increasing the numbers:** A group can start with as few as two children and generally quickly increases to capacity (6 children). It is in the teacher's interest for a group to run at full capacity of six children within a period of 6 months. Should there be interest but the parents choose not to increase the number of children to full capacity, the teacher will apply a levy of 20% onto the fees to ensure she can grow her revenue.



Daily snacks

Snack time is an important part of the Play Sense day, because we believe that not only do little ones eat better when sharing a 'meal' together, but also benefit socially. It is recommended that unless there are allergies or religious preferences to consider, all children eat the same snacks. As parents you will take turns to supply these snacks for all children, so it is important to consider offering healthy snacks.

The children make their own snacks at school. The parents provide the food in a variety of ways - each family takes a turn at providing food for the week or the Host Home will provide the basics, such as water and the staple and then the rest of the families take it in turns to provide the fruit, proteins and spreads.

Please adhere to these healthy eating guidelines:

- Whole grain, preferably homemade breads, crackers or biscuits
- Seasonal fruit and veggie sticks
- Healthy spreads including nut-butter (if no allergies in the group), mashed avo, hummus, etc
- Proteins – cheese, cold meats, biltong and yoghurt

Foods to Avoid:

To keep our children healthy, please avoid sending

- Any convenience foods that contain more than 3 ingredients
- Convenience foods made predominantly of refined wheat like cakes and biscuits as well as processed foods such as puffed rice and packet cereals and smoked meats (unless naturally smoked with no nitrates)
- Processed sugars or cornstarch found in juices, baked goods, yoghurts and dairy desserts.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS AND BREAKS

Paid breaks during the year include:

- **Public and religious holidays** in accordance with the national school system.
- **Seven weeks of school holidays**
 - **One week** over Easter – dates to be confirmed by Play Sense annually.
 - **Two weeks** paid leave – dates to be determined by the teacher in discussion with the parents.
 - **Four weeks** paid leave over the summer holidays.

Sick leave – If a teacher is ill, she will supply a substitute teacher for the day. These teachers are generally Play Sense trained and the teacher pays this stand-in teacher directly.

FEES

Monthly

School fees are payable monthly and are due in advance, no later than the 1st of the month.

Late fees

The timely payment of school fees by the first of the month reflects the respect you have for your teacher. Please bear in mind that most of our teachers have pressing bills to pay and late payments affect their lives materially. Consistent late payment may result in your child being removed from the group.

SETTLING IN

The children may take a couple of weeks to settle into the group. The Play Sense teacher does her best to make the adjustment period as comfortable as possible for the little ones, but they will have some moments of insecurity initially and it's best to be prepared for this. During the first few weeks it is very common for a child to start crying when a parent leaves and then to stop two minutes later and start playing. Some children even start crying again when a parent arrives to fetch them! This is completely normal and although it may be difficult for you to deal with, rest assured that we will let you know if your child isn't coping. If, after a month, your child is showing no signs of adjusting to the playgroup environment, it may be necessary to take your child out of the group and re-enrol him/her at a later stage. Not all children are ready for playgroup at two years, and we need to respect each child's level of readiness as part of who they are. Sometimes even a couple of months can make all the difference.

First day at playgroup is a big event in your little one's life (and in yours) and how you handle it can make a big difference. Here are some tips to make things a little easier:

- On the way to playgroup, chat to your child about where you are taking him/her and make sure he/she knows that you will be letting him/her play there while you go to work/shopping and that you will fetch him/her straight afterwards.
- When you arrive at playgroup, settle your child in and stay for 15 minutes of book-sharing. Once you have spent this time together, say goodbye cheerfully and say something to indicate that you will be back soon, e.g. "See you after mom has gone to the shop".
- Try not to stay longer or hesitate if your child starts to cry – it's important that you show your child that there's nothing to worry about and that you are confident that they'll adjust.
- When you fetch your child, ask them to show you what they did at school and encourage them to tell you about their day.

Your little one will settle in within a couple of weeks and will look forward to coming to school each day!

Illness

If your child is ill and not going to attend school, please contact the teacher before 09h00 to let her know. If your child has a contagious illness, a cough or heavy cold or a fever, please keep him/her at home.

Toys

Your little one is welcome to bring his/her comfort object. Please do not send dummies as these should be used for sleep time only at this stage. Please do not send toys to school, apart from teddy bears or comfort objects. If your child cannot separate from a toy, he/she may bring it on the understanding that if it comes it must be shared OR placed on a shelf for the school day.

Clothes

Your child will need a spare set of weather-appropriate clothes in his/her bag every day. Please label all clothing. Please do not send your child to school in special clothes as these may get soiled or damaged.

Other requirements (Please label)

- School bag
- Face cloth
- Cushion / pillow
- Hat in summer
- Sun cream
- One photo of child's face and one of the family
- Plastic cup and plastic plate (plain, no characters)

Waste material

If you have any sturdy cardboard boxes, bottle tops, cotton reels, clean empty containers, magazines, old birthday cards or any other waste materials which you think we can use, please send it along as just about anything can be recycled! Any old clothes or accessories (the more way-out the better) would be useful additions to the dress-up box!

GENERAL

Should you wish to take your child out of the group, please give the teacher one calendar month's notice.

We trust that the Play Sense journey will be a positive one for your toddler and that the learning experiences will last well into the early school years, resulting in good socialization skills and improved preschool readiness.



THE PLAY SENSE TEAM



Megan Faure

Best known for co-authoring *Baby Sense* and founding the Baby Sense Company, Meg is an Occupational Therapist with a passion for the care and development of babies and young children. Meg started the first 2to3 groups 18 years ago for her own son and is delighted to be involved in formalizing the program with Lara.

Meg has worked in paediatrics in the USA and South Africa for two decades and continues to see babies at her practice in Cape Town. In addition, Meg regularly lectures to both professionals and parents on various baby and childcare issues. She is a journalist and author in the field of child psychology, parenting and child development. She has written *Baby Sense*, *Sleep Sense*, *Feeding Sense*, *Your Sensory Baby*, *Pregnancy Sense*, *Weaning Sense* and *Allergy Sense*. Meg writes for several regional and national publications in the UK and South Africa.



Lara Schoenfeld

Lara is an OT who started Nanny 'n Me six years ago after experiencing the struggle of being a part time lecturer at UCT and a mom. She really wanted to ensure that her children's need for a secure loving environment that provided rich, varied play opportunities was met. It was her nanny who taught her so much in terms of her own childhood – she had never painted or built a puzzle until being employed in Lara's home. Lara now employs a team of fourteen OTs who facilitate weekly hands on learning groups with nannies and the child they care for, to approximately 100 groups in Cape Town. She was a finalist in the Business Women's Association competition in 2017. She is a speaker at many baby clinics on "Leaving home with peace of mind – back to work blues". She recently worked on a book with Liz Senior of Clamber Club which will be published in 2019. She dreams of seeing the Play Sense and Nanny 'n me business model change early childhood education in the lives of nannies' communities as well.



Melissa Cumming

Melissa brings 13 years of local & international experience in both SME and Corporate environments with a diverse skill set in Business Development, Marketing & Communications and Operations & Product Management.

Melissa is solution-driven, accustomed to working in a demanding environment and is committed to producing excellent results. She has been brought into the business to work with Meg & Lara on taking the very solid foundations of Play Sense and, together, building a scalable and sustainable framework for future growth.

Melissa is extremely focused on customer-centricity and client service, and being a Mom of toddlers herself, she is nurturing and passionate about early child development and is able to resonate on a very personal level with our current and prospective parents. Having managed a start-up business herself, her role is also to mentor and support our teachers as franchisees of Play Sense and help them achieve their fullest potential as new business owners.

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