

Does not play well with others ^[1]

Making it count! Election blog

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Blog post ^[2]

Text of the post:

Note to the Harper family regarding your son Stephen;

I am writing on behalf of the daycare staff regarding your son Stephen and his ongoing behavioural challenges. A number of incidents have caused some concern among caregivers, children, and several parents, and after five years I regret to tell you we have reached a crisis point.

Over the years we have tried to address Stephen's difficulty at playing well with others through redirection and positive reinforcement, but lately when we attempt to talk with him about his behaviour he insists that he will only answer one question a day from no more than three caregivers, and only if they stay on the other side of the play room. Last week he cut off questions altogether, saying he would not tolerate "gotcha" caregiving.

Stephen seems to find our focus on cooperation irritating, particularly during play time when the children collectively decide which group activities they would like to engage in. His behaviour escalated in November when, after several of the other children wanted to play soccer (not his choice), Stephen locked the play area so that no one would have access to it or any of the toys inside until it was agreed he could choose the activities for the rest of the year. And in violation of our "no name calling" policy, he now refers to those other children as the "coalition of the losers"--although ironically he occasionally associated with them the previous year.

All our programs encourage sharing and taking turns, and we routinely tell the older children that they must be patient with the younger ones. However, last week we distinctly heard Stephen telling the infants they had embraced a "culture of defeat" because they were allowed first pick of the stuffy toys. And at the annual fundraiser last fall he became impatient and yelled at some of the smaller children who required help exiting the bouncy castle; he was quite irate that because they had "made the choice to not practice good balance" he had to wait in line.

We are also at a loss as to why, after initially having no concerns, Stephen is now opposed to the sign-in-and-out sheet (which is, as you know, a safety measure), as well as the communal journal used to facilitate ongoing communication between parents and caregivers about their child's daily activities. When asked, he only responds that the daycare has no right to treat law-abiding children in this manner because it's "nobody's business" if he's here, and that detailed information gathering--even for the purposes of ensuring the daycare is meeting the nutritional and developmental needs of the children--is unnecessarily intrusive, although to this date we have received no complaints from other parents or children.

Stephen's attitude towards the arts seems somewhat conflicted. At times he appears to enjoy the craft centre and sing-alongs, but on several occasions we found him trying to take credit for work that was not his. When the other children confronted him he responded by saying, somewhat bizarrely, that artists didn't represent the interests or priorities of ordinary children.

As you know, we have been trying to help Stephen overcome his difficulties in working with other students, particularly those he has little in common with. However, for last week's field trip, Stephen convinced someone with access to alter the returned permission forms for the children he prefers to avoid, changing the wording to suggest that parental permission had "not" been given. When confronted, Stephen first denied any wrongdoing, then refused to accept responsibility for his actions, insisting that it was for the good of the daycare that certain children not attend the outing, and the staff were making an issue of something other children really didn't care about.

We would also appreciate you explaining to Stephen that even though he has been with us for five years, we see no reason to change the name of our facility to "The Harper Daycare." We have been in operation for years and have cared for hundreds of children; our name reflects our role in the community and the responsibility we feel to all children, not just one. This is a point of contention that seems to be causing him a fair amount of anger--and as you know, Stephen's ability to process his anger productively instead of lashing out at others is something that we have been helping him work on, with little success.

Over the years we've worked with many children--some more challenging than others--and have done everything possible to bring out the best in all those in our care, and to teach them a variety of life skills. We have always worked closely with parents to provide a network of

support, and to help them in the important task of preparing their children for involvement in the wider community. However, after several years of working with Stephen, we have come to the difficult conclusion that unless he immediately begins to treat children and caregivers--even those he does not agree with or like--with respect; learns to take turns, share and cooperate; recognizes that he cannot always make decisions for others; stops trying to take credit for someone else's good work; admits his mistakes and takes responsibility for his actions; and works on his anger, we will have no choice but to suggest you find another daycare more suited to his personality.

We deeply regret it coming to this point, but it is clear that Stephen's personality is simply not conducive to environments that focus on mutual respect, care for our most vulnerable, and universal well-being.

Very sincerely yours,

Director, Care and Care Alike Family Day Care Centre

Region: Canada ^[3]

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