

Background

This Year-in-Review provides highlights of the variety of program opportunities offered over 2024 by the Middlesex EarlyON team. New programs in 2024 included Zumbini®, Infant Massage and Little Sensory Seekers. We expanded our support to Kindergarten bound children by offering additional Kindergarten Social programs. We also expanded our support around Early Developmental Screening. River Heights EarlyON Child & Family Centre opened its doors in March 2024, bringing the total program locations to 10. Programs offered through this location included Baby Time, Open Play, Busy Bees, and Infant Massage. In 2024, the total staffing compliment was increased to 4 full-time facilitators as well as 1 casual facilitator.

About our Families

EarlyON Child & Family Centres collect information from families to establish a database of visitors of caregivers and children to programs. The information collected includes Municipality of residence, contact information and number and ages of children.

A total of **303 new families** were registered with EarlyON in 2024.



- **8 families** from Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- **26 families** from Township of Lucan-Biddulph
- **24 families** from Municipality of North Middlesex
- **51 families** from Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- **94 families** from Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
- **18 families** from Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- **26 families** from Municipality of Thames Centre
- **1 family** from the Village of Newbury
- **55 families** registered who reside outside of Middlesex County

In-person Programs



311

Baby Time Programs

Baby Time is a play-based learning opportunity for infants 0 to 12 months of age and their caregivers. Our EarlyON Facilitators lead the group in singing and moving with baby as well as conversations around infant topics. Drop-in program.

516

Play & Learn Programs

Play & Learn offers a play-based learning opportunity for children 0-6 years of age and their caregiver (s). Activities planned by our EarlyON facilitators encourage positive parent and child interaction and inspire play and learning. We also offer a circle time (songs and stories) at the end. Drop-in program.

43

Open Spaces Programs

Open Spaces Outdoor Adventures offers free play and adventures in learning in the great outdoors. Child(ren) take the lead in these nature-based programs. Best suited for children 2 to 6 years of age, but children from 0-6 years are welcome. Registration required.

69

Open Play Programs

Open Play offers children and their caregivers an opportunity to play, learn and connect at River Heights EarlyON Child & Family Centre. Drop-in program.

33

Zumbini® Programs

Zumbini® is a 6-week program that uses music and movement to support child development. For children ages 0-4 years and their caregivers. Registration required.

33

Infant Massage Programs

Infant Massage is a 5-week program that gives caregivers the tools and information they need to communicate with their baby through loving touch. Registration required.

11

Sensory Seekers Programs

Little Sensory Seekers programs are held in a Sensory Light Space. Light sensory play uses lights, shadows, and transparent materials to stimulate imagination and creativity. These spaces were made available throughout the year in Strathroy, Ilderton and River Heights.

8

Busy Bees Programs

This program nurtures children's sense of joy and wonder. Each program has a different theme and focus with an educator-directed activity. Best suited for children 2-6 years of age. Registration required. Offered at River Heights.

29

Roots of Empathy Programs

Through Roots of Empathy, children are coached to recognize and connect with the vulnerability and humanity of a baby who visits their classroom throughout the school year with their parent(s), along with a trained Roots of Empathy Instructor. Offered in a Kindergarten class at River Heights Public School in Dorchester.

Kindergarten Support Programs



Ready Set Learn



Take a peek inside our Ready Set Learn program. This video gives you a glimpse inside a program and includes parent testimonials.

Ready Set Learn is a 4-week program that provides caregivers and their Kindergarten-bound child with a learning experience that will support a successful school transition. Registration required. Offered winter-early Spring.

In 2024, a total of 4 programs were offered between January and April. Morning programs were offered in Ilderton, Strathroy and Dorchester. A second evening program was offered in Strathroy.

A total of 62 unique children and caregivers were supported, with 235 combined visits.

In 2025, we plan to offer a total of 6 programs including Komoka, Strathroy (2), Ilderton (2) and Dorchester. Two of these will be held in the evening.

Kindergarten Socials



Kindergarten Socials allow for children bound for Kindergarten to meet new friends, participate in fun & engaging activities, and enjoy songs & stories. Caregivers can ask questions of educators about successfully transitioning to Kindergarten. Early developmental screening is also made available with trained staff. Registration required.

In 2024, 5 Kindergarten Socials were offered in Lucan, Ilderton, Strathroy, Glencoe and Dorchester. These were all offered in the evening in August.

A total of 58 children and 85 caregivers were newly served, and 104 children and 156 caregivers participated. A total of 32 library cards were issued through these programs.

In 2025, 7 programs will be offered, all in the evening.

Ready Set Learn Lending Kits - 2025

Plans are underway for the development of Ready Set Learn lending kits. Kits will be available for lending through EarlyON Facilitators. Each lending kit will contain items and activities that cover skills essential to a successful school transition including sequencing and letter, number, and colour recognition.

These kits will build upon the above programs and will support the 2024-2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan.

Kindergarten Socials

In 2024, Kindergarten Socials were offered in Lucan, Ilderton, Strathroy, Glencoe and Dorchester.



The following are caregiver testimonials.

What did you like about the program?

How interactive it was for the children and the different type of activities.

The amount of activities for the children to participate in. Provided an array of activities that appealed to not only their interests but helped provide ideas for home.

Meeting other children attending the same school.

Appreciated being able to complete the ASQ® Questionnaire and talk about it with the team.

General Comments

Thank you so much for all the hard work that went into it. My son had so much fun and it made me realize, even though Mommy and Daddy are not ready for him to start kindergarten he is more than ready. I look forward to potential more events like this and would definitely recommend it to all Kindergarten parents.

Very appreciative for this program. My son and I had a wonderful time and we were able to get a better understanding of the skills/traits to monitor moving forward.



New for 2025



In 2025, the plan is to offer a similar program as was delivered in 2024. Programs will commence earlier in 2024, now starting in February. The rationale for moving the program earlier in the year is to allow time for caregivers and children to prepare for the school transition including the ability to connect with family-centered services and participate in library and EarlyON programs.

The program will be called Kinder Connect. This name is also used in the City of London for a similar program. Programs in 2025 will be offered in seven locations: Strathroy, Lucan, Ilderton, Dorchester, Komoka, Glencoe, and Parkhill. Because of the volume of children in Strathroy-Caradoc and area, we have offered a second program in Strathroy. Programs will run February through early April. These programs will be offered in the evening.

Our Program Reach

2,956
unique
children

2,432
unique
caregivers

14,291
total visits
by children

10,988
total visits
by caregivers



When a family first visits a location for an in-person program, they are marked as unique (new). If a family visits another location for an in-person program, they are again marked as unique at that respective location. All children and caregivers/parents are marked as visitors each time they attend a program.

Ailsa Craig

1 program

11
unique children
& caregivers

11
visits by children
& caregivers

Coldstream

14 programs

212
unique children
& caregivers

392
visits by children
& caregivers

Dorchester

96 programs

479
unique children
& caregivers

2,613
visits by children
& caregivers

Glencoe

99 programs

279
unique children
& caregivers

1,587
visits by children
& caregivers

Ilderton

165 programs

765
unique children
& caregivers

4,292
visits by children
& caregivers

Kilworth

1 program

18
unique children
& caregivers

18
visits by children
& caregivers

Komoka

59 programs

568
unique children
& caregivers

1,980
visits by children
& caregivers

Lucan

103 programs

427
unique children
& caregivers

2,291
visits by children
& caregivers

Mount Brydges

83 programs

361
unique children
& caregivers

1,726
visits by children
& caregivers

Newbury

1 program

4
unique children
& caregivers

4
visits by children
& caregivers

Parkhill

66 programs

294
unique children
& caregivers

1,556
visits by children
& caregivers

River Heights

146 programs

347
unique children
& caregivers

1,821
visits by children
& caregivers

Strathroy

178 programs

1,350
unique children
& caregivers

5,805
visits by children
& caregivers

Thorndale

57 programs

273
unique children
& caregivers

1,133
visits by children
& caregivers

Virtual Programs

Bounce Back and Thrive is a resiliency skills training program designed to meet the needs of parents (and those in a parenting role) of children under the age of 8. BBT helps parents gain self-regulation and thinking skills that increase their capacity to provide caring relationships and role model resilience-building skills in daily interactions with their children. Then, it shows parents how to directly introduce basic resiliency skills to children, and that helps children bounce back and thrive. This program is 10-weeks and offered virtually. We offered one 10-week series in 2024.



Special Topics: In 2024, we offered two virtual CPR/First Aid programs, in partnership with Middlesex-London Paramedic Services, and two virtual nutrition programs in partnership with Four Counties Family Health Team (Infant Feeding and Packing a Healthy School Lunch).

47 unique caregivers
67 total visits by caregivers

M.I.friends

M.I.friends was developed to provide families with tools, videos, and resources to help children build resiliency. This program is best suited for children over 3 years of age.

Registered families are provided with:

- Access code to the digital platform
- A comfort toy (named Poppy) to help manage stressful situations when big feelings arise
- Access to support videos and activities to work through with your child
- Access to parent strategies, tools, resources, and suggestions on how to support your child as they learn to self-regulate

This program was developed with the experts at The Mary J. Wright Child Youth and Development Clinic, Faculty of Education, Western University and educational advisors with decades of experience helping children and their families manage their feelings. Thanks to Optimist Clubs, The Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation and generous community sponsors, this program is available to families at no cost.

30 families were supported



Facilitating Connections

The EarlyON Team is available to support families in connecting to family-centered services, provide information on parenting or child-development topics and other types of consultations to support caregivers in their role.

In 2024, the team was involved in approximately 600 individual consultations. The majority of connections made were in the area of early learning/parenting and safety (e.g. car seat safety).



ABC Read with Me Book Bag

All new and expectant parents/caregivers in Middlesex County are eligible to receive a free ABC Read With Me bag that includes board books ideal for sharing with babies. Bags are available at Middlesex County Libraries and Middlesex EarlyON program locations. **The Middlesex EarlyON team distributed approximately 81 bags.**

EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

- ✓ There is a large body of evidence that shows that standardized developmental screening and monitoring is critical for timely diagnosis and intervention and beneficial to the early learning and development of children.
- ✓ Early developmental screening was identified as a priority in the 2024-2028 Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan: “Support earlier identification of developmental concerns and facilitate connections to support services and programs”.
- ✓ Early developmental screening supports the Ministry of Education Mandatory Core Services for EarlyON: Making Connections for Families



The ASQ® is an in-depth developmental monitoring tool that is parent completed and then scored by a trained professional. This questionnaire supports 1 month to 66 months of age and covers 5 areas of development (communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social).

If identification of social-emotional challenges arises with the ASQ®, a second screening tool can be provided. This is called the Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ®:SE-2). This questionnaire supports 1 month to 60 months of age.

- If the total score falls in the **white area**, it is above the cutoff, and the child’s development appears to be on schedule.
- If the total score falls in the **grey area**, it is close to the cutoff. Facilitator to provide age-appropriate learning activities. Suggest caregiver continue to monitor.
- If the total score is in the **black area**, it is above the cut off. Further assessment may be needed. Facilitator to recommend seeing health care provider, as well as other agencies e.g. Tyke Talk.



In September, we offered a Early Developmental Screening clinic during our regularly scheduled Play & Learns and Baby Times. A total of **100 ASQ® checklists** were distributed and scored. Screens were completed across most age groups. **An additional five ASQ®:SE-2 were provided and scored.**

A total of **27 were identified in the grey** and were provided with resource sheets that included activity ideas to support development.

A total of **17 were identified in the black** and appropriate referrals were made. Most commonly, the recommendation was made to discuss the results with the primary care provider. tykeTALK (speech and language) was also a common referral.



100
developmental screens completed

Scored in Grey: 27/100
Scored in Black: 17/100

Other Special Programs

Here are some examples of other special programs offered in 2024!



Krafty Kids!

Families enjoyed making seasonal crafts in Lucan, Dorchester, Strathroy and Glencoe on a Saturday in December.



STEM

On a Saturday in Ilderton, using materials like LEGO, marble mazes and other creative materials, children were able to experiment with coding, build creations, and explore project-based stations.



Longwoods

Families explored colours & textures, listened to the sounds of the forest & walked to the First Nations village to learn about First Nations communities 1,000 years ago.



Bear Hunt

Families were able to enjoy an interactive and fun story singalong to the book "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen, along the Lucan Tales & Trails.



Splashpad Week

We took Play & Learn and Baby Time on the road to 12 splash pads across the County in July 2024.



Kids in the Kitchen

Families enjoyed a hands-on cooking experience while enjoying quality time together. This program was offered on a Saturday in Strathroy.



River Heights

Quarter 1, 2024 marked the official opening of River Heights EarlyON Child & Family Centre.

Thames Valley District School Board received approval from the Ministry of Education to tender a 8.4 million Child Care Centre and EarlyON Child and Family Centre at River Heights Public School. Construction was completed in August 2023. In December 2023, the County of Middlesex received funding from the City of London, as Service System Manager, to support the operations of River Heights.

Operations commenced in March 2024. Programs offered through this location included Baby Time, Open Play, Busy Bees, and Infant Massage. One Facilitator is dedicated to offering programs at this location.



Light Sensory Rooms

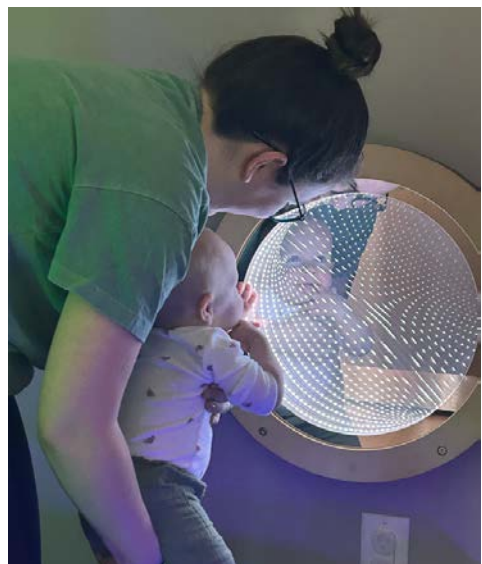
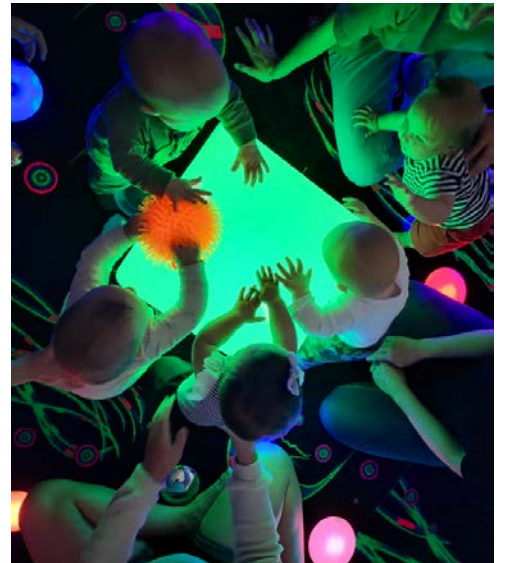
In 2023 and 2024, EarlyON Child & Family Centres were provided with special Mental Health funding through the Province of Ontario. This funding is intended to leverage local expertise and enhance existing mental health resources and capacity building strategies to support children, families and the workforce in early years settings.

A portion of this funding supported investments into a variety of light sensory materials. Light sensory play uses lights, shadows, and transparent materials to stimulate imagination and creativity in child development.

A light sensory room was created in Ilderton and River Heights using materials acquired with this special funding. These rooms remain open for use during regular drop-in programming. A special registered program that involves engaging in sensory activities was also offered in Ilderton and River Heights. This program is very popular, with spaces filling very quickly, with a wait list. These unique light sensory programs have been coined **Little Sensory Seekers**.

A variety of materials were also acquired for the Strathroy location. Without the space to designate a dedicated room, programming has been offered as special programs in the large program room located at the rear of the library branch.

For 2025, we are exploring ways we can bring this experience to other program locations.





In Quarter 1 we introduced a new program called Zumbini®. EarlyON Facilitator Sarah Sutherland-Sebo was trained in 2023 to offer this unique program that uses music and movement to support cognitive, social, fine/gross motor skill, and emotional development for children ages 0 to 4 years, as well as support a bonding experience between children and caregivers.

This is a 6-week program that requires registration.

In 2024, we offered the program in Strathroy, Dorchester, Glencoe, Komoka, Parkhill and Lucan. This program was very popular, with spaces filling very quickly, often with a wait list.



Roots of Empathy

Donna Fleming continued to offer the Roots of Empathy program in a kindergarten classroom at River Heights Elementary School through January to June. This program teaches children about their own feelings and feelings of others. Children watched baby Makai grow over 27 weeks.

In October 2024, the program commenced again in a new classroom. This time the children welcomed baby Isla. Children are coached to observe and read the cues Isla gives as to how she is feeling.

From here, children are encouraged to talk about their own emotions and understand how their classmates feel.



2024 Partnerships



A member of the Oral Health team from Middlesex-London Health Unit attended both Play & Learn and Baby Time in Strathroy to share information about: programs for children and youth under the age of 17; brushing and caring for your infant and child's teeth; and to answer any questions caregivers may have around oral health. In 2025, this program will be offered in Strathroy, Komoka and Ilderton, twice in each location, during Play & Learn and Baby Time.



A transportation safety expert from London Health Sciences Centre was available during Baby Time in Ilderton and Strathroy to address questions and concerns related to car seats. In 2025, this program will be offered in Strathroy and Ilderton, twice in each location, during Baby Time.



The 3rd Monday of the month at Glencoe Baby Time caregivers with their infants can meet with a Registered Nurse & Dietitian from West Elgin Community Health Centre. This program will continue into 2025.



Middlesex-London Paramedic Services reviewed Child and Infant Choking and CPR. This interactive session reviewed crucial steps that can be taken in the most critical moments of an airway emergency. This program was offered virtually (afternoon and evening session).



Registered Dietitian from Four Counties Family Health Team presented virtually on two topics: introducing solid foods to infant and making your own infant food; and ideas on how to pack a balanced and tasty school lunch for your kids.



We continued to collaborate with the Period Equity Project (PEP) Strathroy. Through this project, residents in financial need or have other barriers to accessing menstrual products can have some support. We have a limited supply of tampons and pads available at each of our program locations to support distribution to EarlyON families who are in need.



We partnered with Thames Valley District School Board and London Catholic District School Board to offer drop-in developmental screening clinics in Lucan, Komoka, Strathroy, Glencoe and Dorchester through July and August. These clinics targeted Kindergarten-bound children.

New for 2025



A tykeTALK Speech Language Pathologist from Thames Valley Children's Centre will be available to answer questions and provide strategies to promote early language development through play. This program will be held during regularly scheduled Play & Learns in Glencoe, Mount Brydges and Strathroy. The plan is to trial once in Quarter 1 in each location.



A Physiotherapist from Thames Valley Children's Centre will be available to answer questions and provide strategies to promote gross motor development through play. This program will be held during regularly scheduled Baby Times in Glencoe, Mount Brydges and Strathroy. The plan is to trial once in Quarter 1 in each location.



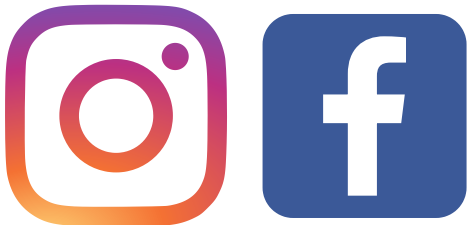
Vanier Child & Family Therapist available to provide consultation regarding infants' emotional needs and what impacts brain development. Hands-on practical "in the moment" role modeling for families. Single-session therapy sessions for parent or the parent and child can be made available. This drop-in program will be held during regularly scheduled Play & Learn.

Communication & Promotion

Upon registration, families are asked how they heard about Middlesex EarlyON programs.



- 46% reported Family or Friend
- 13% reported Social Media
- 17% reported EarlyON/Library Staff
- 10% reported Library Website
- 5% reported Middlesex Family Connections/familyinfo.ca
- 3% reported child care
- 2% reported health provider
- 2% reported other communications



Through our socials, we share information about our programs as well as share information on family-centered services and parenting information by social media and email.

Over 2,300 Facebook followers
Over 1,000 Instagram followers

Month-at-a-glance calendar

Each month we create a month-at-a-glance calendar. This calendar will include drop-in and registration-only programs by location. Any known cancellations we will also include.



Our Socials

We use our socials to share program information and any cancellations. We also share stories and pictures from our programs and any news!



Email

We use our email list to share program information and any cancellations.





library.middlesex.ca/events

Visit our library website for more information on EarlyON programs and other early years & adult programs offered in branches across the County!



earlyon@middlesex.ca
519-666-3227



 @middlesexearlyon
 @EarlyONMiddlesex



MEET THE TEAM

Allison Beauchamp, EarlyON Senior Facilitator

Allison is a Registered Early Childhood Educator with +25 years of experience in the early years' field. For the past 19 years she has been with the Ontario Early Years Centre (known now as Middlesex EarlyON). She has past experience working all age groups in licensed child care as well as supervisory and executive director experience in licensed child care. She also has her Developmental Service Worker Diploma and worked in that field when she first graduated college.

Allison facilitates programs in Mount Brydges as well as all our Virtual programs. She is trained in Reaching in, Reaching Out, and trained and facilitates Bounce Back & Thrive (resiliency and self-regulation). She is also trained in Ages & Stages (ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2), Make the Connection (infant attachment) and Infant Massage.



Donna Fleming, EarlyON Facilitator

Donna is a Registered Early Childhood Educator who started with Ontario Early Years Centre in 2017 (known now as Middlesex EarlyON). She has worked with children in various roles for most of her life- from summer camps, Sunday school, daycare and home child care, to teaching English in a kindergarten in Hong Kong.

Donna facilitates programs in Dorchester, Thorndale and River Heights. She also facilitates our Open Spaces Program and Ready Set Learn Program. Donna is trained in Ages & Stages (ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2) and Infant Massage. Donna also facilitates Roots of Empathy.



Sarah Sutherland-Sebo, EarlyON Facilitator

Sarah, a Registered Early Childhood Educator and resident of Middlesex County, comes to the early years team with experience as a kindergarten classroom RECE with Thames Valley District School Board as well as child care program provider for newcomer children. She also has previous experience with the YMCA and as a Community Home Child Care provider.

Sarah facilitates programs in Strathroy, Glencoe and Parkhill. She is trained in Zumbini, Infant Massage and Ages & Stages (ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2).



Ki Hulley, EarlyON Facilitator

Ki has been a Registered Early Childhood Educator for 10 years. Prior to commencing with Middlesex EarlyON, Ki worked with London Bridges Child Care Services where she provided care and facilitated learning in all classrooms, stepped in as acting director, mentored students, and lead professional development workshops for educators. Ki has specialized training in sleep training, supporting children with autism and children's mental health.

Ki facilitates programs in Lucan, Komoka and Ilderton. Ki facilitates the Ready Set Learn program. She is trained in Infant Massage and Ages & Stages (ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE-2).



Tiffany Wilson, EarlyON Facilitator

Tiffany has been a Registered Early Childhood Educator since 2009. Tiffany has been volunteering with us in Strathroy since June 2022. She has recently taken on a temporary causal position with the team.

Tiffany is currently providing program coverage across a variety of locations.

