



EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES PROGRAM

Background

Board Policy 1: Board Mandate, Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals calls us to honour our diversity and implement best practices in education to support the learning needs of all students. Early childhood is a significant time in child development. The Division supports early childhood programs permeated by the Catholic faith. An integrated Early Childhood Services Program (ECS) will be provided to facilitate the transition from home to school for children who meet the eligibility criteria.

“Kindergarten” is one component of the total ECS program and is considered to be the year prior to Grade 1 entry. Alberta Education funds early intervention programs for children with assessed education needs. Children who are assessed as requiring extensive support may be eligible for an ECS program for three (3) years prior to Grade 1 entry. Children who have mild or moderate support needs may be eligible for an ECS program for two (2) years prior to Grade 1 entry. Participation in ECS programs is voluntary. A child becomes a student on September 1 in a year the student is 6 years of age or older. A child does not, by reason of attending an ECS program, become a resident student of the board, or entitled to any of the rights or benefits given to a student resident to the board.

Definitions

“**Early Childhood Service**” programs provide services to address the developmental needs of children before they enter grade 1. In ECS programs, young children participate as active partners in learning, build a set of shared experiences and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for subsequent learning. ECS programs provide additional support for children with special needs to assist them in reaching their full learning potential.

“**Kindergarten**” means one (1) component of the total ECS program funded by Alberta Education, and refers to the year immediately prior to grade 1. Kindergarten, although not mandatory, is an important component of Early Childhood Services

“**Pre-Kindergarten**” the division has Pre-Kindergarten programs (referred to as Early Learning Programs) which support both PUF Supported Learners & Independent Learners:

- “**PUF Supported Learners**” Alberta Education provides Program Unit Funding (PUF) for children between 2.8 and 4.8 years of age who have a severe developmental delay or a severe delay in speech and language and have been identified as needing early learning intervention.

- **“Independent Learners”** Children who are 4 by December 31st in their year prior to Kindergarten, or children who are age 3 upon entry for their first year of access to Early Learning Programming.

Principles

The principles Kindergarten teachers should use when working with a child are outlined in Alberta Education’s *Kindergarten Program Statement* (revised 2008). These principles set the context for programs for all children. However, children with diverse needs require accommodations and adaptations to the program. This statement describes the learner expectations that will help prepare children and provide a foundation for later success.

Program

1. Children will be admitted into ECS programs when they have reached the age of five years by December 31 in the year in which they are enrolling. Children eligible for Mild/Moderate programming or Program Unit Funding may be admitted before their Kindergarten year.
2. Evaluations of child participation in the ECS program shall address the social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual growth of each child. Progress reports will be made periodically to the parent.
3. The E.C.S. teacher will maintain screening / assessment information that complies with *Administrative Procedure 305: Assessing and Evaluating Student Achievement*.
4. The Kindergarten teacher shall be responsible for assessing each child for readiness into grade one. If, in the opinion of the teacher, the child is deemed not to be ready for entry into grade one, the principal and the Kindergarten teacher shall meet with the parents of the child to determine the best course of action for the child.
5. The Kindergarten teacher will develop, implement and regularly review an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) for each child in their class with mild, moderate or severe developmental needs, with input from consulting professionals. When creating an IPP for a PUF supported learner, the Kindergarten teacher will ensure coordinated IPP creation with the Supervisor of Early Learning and the Inclusive Education Liaison at the school.
6. The Early Learning Supervisor or certificated designate will develop, implement and regularly review an Individualized Program Plan for each child in an Early Learning Program with mild, moderate or severe disabilities, with input from consulting professionals.
7. The Early Learning Supervisor shall act as the Program Coordinator for the Kindergarten children requiring specialized programming.

8. Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their child and are valued members of the Learning Team. Parental/Guardian consent will be granted prior to the commencement of specialized programming. Collaborative team consultation will inform all program decisions.
9. Parents/Guardians have the right to make a formal appeal of decisions regarding special educational needs of their child to the Superintendent of Schools.

References **Sections 33, 21, 42, 56, Education Act**
 Early Childhood Regulation 31/2002
 Funding Manual for School Authorities
 Kindergarten Program Statement
 Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning Standards for Special Education
 Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education