

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Background

Early childhood is a particularly significant period in human development. Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs provide services to address the developmental needs of children before they enter grade one. 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 meet the developmental learning needs of children and prepare them for lifelong learning.

The Division supports early childhood education programs permeated by the Catholic faith for children of eligible age. The programs will reflect Division mission, goals and objectives while adhering to the goals, objectives and program dimensions as outlined by Alberta Education.

Definitions

Early Childhood Education programs provide services to address the developmental needs of children before they enter grade one.

Eligible age means age prior to January 1 of the current school year is:

- 5 years in the case of a regular program child;
- 3 years 6 months in the case of a child who has severe disabilities, is benchmarked as English is Second Language (ESL) or is hearing impaired.
- 3 years 6 months in the case of a child with a mild/moderate disability/delay and coded as such by Alberta Health Services or another qualified professional.

Kindergarten programs provide services to address developmental needs of children in the year immediately before they enter grade one. Occasionally a child may spend two years in a Kindergarten program.

Program Unit Funding (PUF): in addition to Base Instruction Funding, is available to approved ECS operators and school authorities for young children who are 2½ to 6 years of age by September 1, and who have been identified with a severe disability/delay. Children are eligible for up to three years of ECS funded programming, depending on age, severity of the disability/delay and its impact on the child's ability to function within an ECS program. The Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education apply to children who meet the eligibility criteria for special education programming.

Mild/Moderate Funding (M/M): these definitions depend on the type of mild/moderate diagnosis. The most common is Code 30 m/m Communication Disorder/Delay:

A child identified with a mild to moderate communication disorder/delay is one who:

- Has a diagnosed mild or moderate disorder or identified delay in expressive and/or receptive language; or

- Has a diagnosed disorder/delay in articulation, phonology, voice, fluency and/or social (pragmatic) communication; or
- Is at risk for learning difficulties as demonstrated by education-based assessments, which may include tests of phonological awareness.

Individualized Program Plan (IPP): ECS IPP's are developed for children aged 2½ to 6 years of age with mild, moderate or severe disabilities and/or delays, and for children who are gifted and talented. A Learning Plan may be used as an IPP for students coded with mild or moderate disabilities. Like an IPP for older students, an ECS IPP is not a daily lesson plan nor is it meant to be all-encompassing. An ECS IPP is an evolving, flexible and future-oriented plan that:

- meets the special education needs of an individual preschool child
- promotes child development by building the child's independence, competence and meaningful participation in daily activities in a variety of environments
- addresses the specific priorities of the child through functional goals which guide classroom activities and routines
- summarizes essential information, including the level of programming, the settings where programming will take place, necessary coordinated support services, and other services to facilitate teaching and learning in the classroom and other environments
- is developed, implemented and evaluated by a collaborative learning team, including parents, teachers, resource personnel and, when possible, the child
- provides an ongoing record to monitor and communicate child growth, and ensure continuity of programming
- guides planning for transition.

Procedures

1. School enrolment in early childhood education programs is optional.
2. Programming will be provided for eligible children with special needs.
3. Evaluation processes will stress individual growth and development of the child rather than comparison with that of others.
4. The operation of early childhood programs will stress the importance of the involvement and the primacy of parents in the education of the child.
5. Each child coded severe for whom a Program Unit Fund has been accessed will be served through an Individualized Program Plan.
6. Kindergarten programs will operate in elementary schools where there is sufficient enrolment to warrant their operation.

- 6.1 Registration for Kindergarten will take place at the local school. Staggered entry will take place during the first two weeks of the year.
 - 6.2 Programs include child, parent, community and staff components that are not solely “in-school” hours.
 - 6.3 Kindergarten programs will be interactive and will be committed to the development of the whole child. Individual needs and respect for variances in learning styles will determine strategies to promote the child’s development.
 - 6.4 Professional development in Kindergarten programs is an ongoing process and takes various forms including in-services, seminars, inter-visitation between programs, and home visits.
7. The Superintendent is responsible for:
 - 7.1 Establishing and meeting Alberta Education program and policy requirements;
 - 7.2 Employing certificated teachers;
 - 7.3 Utilizing approved facilities;
 - 7.4 Assessing children for whom special needs grants will be claimed;
 - 7.5 Monitoring and evaluating the ECS Program;
 - 7.6 Submitting annual reports as required by Alberta Education; and
 - 7.7 Monitoring financial and insurance requirements.
8. School administration is responsible for:
 - 8.1 Assisting teachers in areas of program planning, implementation and evaluation;
 - 8.2 Assisting in the identification of staff development needs;
 - 8.3 Monitoring and evaluating the operation of the ECS program;
 - 8.4 Establishing a Local Advisory Committee (LAC); and
 - 8.5 Ensuring that enrolment and attendance records are adequately maintained.
9. The ECS teacher is responsible for:
 - 9.1 Program planning, implementation and evaluation in accordance with the ECS Program goals;
 - 9.2 Developing an individualized program plan for students coded mild, moderate or severe; and
 - 9.3 Providing parents opportunities to actively participate in the ECS program.
10. Parents are responsible for:
 - 10.1 Assisting in the identification of program needs in relation to the philosophy, goals and program dimensions;
 - 10.2 Being involved in the LAC of the ECS Program, and/or School Council; and

- 10.3 Supporting the program through activities such as assisting in the classroom as an aide or a special resource person and attendance at education programs for parents and other locally planned activities.
- 11. Certificated teachers will administer and score the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) - TA by October 15th.
 - 11.1 Students who are identified by the EYE –TA, or through other supported methods and screens as requiring further Level C testing, will be referred to the Director of Student Services. Once Level C testing is concluded, the Director of Student Services will inform the school of the results and the code to apply for their students, if applicable.
 - 11.2 The school will inform parents of the results of any further testing.
 - 11.2.1 Additionally, the school will ensure that no tuition fees are charged to parents if the Learning Plan/IPP is to be delivered via preschool.
 - 11.2.2 Parents will be enlisted in writing goals for the Learning Plan or IPP.
 - 11.3 Once agreed to and signed by all parties, the Learning Plan or IPP will be scanned to the Director of Student Services.

Reference: Section 8, 30, 60, 61, 113, School Act
Early Childhood Regulation 31/2002
Early Childhood Policy 1.1.3
Funding Manual for School Authorities