



MOOSONEE DISTRICT SCHOOL AREA BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: #205

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THE EARLY LEARNING KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

PURPOSE

The purpose of the early learning-kindergarten program is to establish a strong foundation for learning, and to do so in a safe and caring environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of all children.

The goals of the early learning-kindergarten program are to provide young children with an integrated day of learning; to provide a play-based learning environment; to help children make a smoother transition to Grade 1; and to improve children's prospects for success in school and in their lives beyond school. *Ontario Ministry of Education The Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program. p. 1*

This administrative procedure has been developed to set out Ministry of Education and Moosonee District School Area Board expectations for the early learning-kindergarten program.

DEFINITIONS

Continuum of Development: Continuum of development is a description of the sequences of growth and learning that make up foundation skills and their indicators, organized into broad developmental areas or domains. The continuum represents the continuity, progression, inter-connectedness, complexity, and unique timetables of children's development over time. The developmental continuum represents stages as approximations only. Children can be in various stages of development in different areas of the program, depending on a range of variables. *(See the Ministry document, Early Learning for Every Child Today, for a detailed description of skills and indicators for the social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical domains.)*

Self-regulation: Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and control emotions, behaviour, and attention. Self-regulation provides the underpinning for essential skills needed throughout life, such as planning and problem-solving.

Scaffolding: Scaffolding is an instructional technique whereby the educator models the desired learning strategy or task, and then gradually shifts responsibility to the student. Scaffolding supports the student who is not quite ready to accomplish a task independently. Like the scaffolding on a building, it is intended to be temporary. It is provided to aid the completion of a task and is eventually removed.

Assessment: Assessment is the process of gathering, from a variety of sources, information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations. Assessment strategies include observations, student-teacher conversations, and student products. *(Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013) provides valuable information about using a variety of assessment strategies to inform instructional decisions.)*

Assessment for Learning: Assessment for learning is the ongoing process of gathering and interpreting evidence about student learning for the purpose of determining where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. The information gathered is used by teachers to provide feedback and adjust instruction. This type of assessment is the one most frequently used when working with children in the early years.

Evaluation: Evaluation is the process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria. The information gathered may be used to communicate the student’s achievement to parents, other teachers, and to the students themselves. It occurs at or near the end of a cycle of learning.

Parents: Every use of “parents” in this procedure includes parents/caregivers or guardians or a single parent/caregiver or guardian.

PROCEDURES

1. Goals of the Early Learning Program

1.1 The full-day early learning–kindergarten program reflects the belief that four- and five-year-olds are capable and active learners, full of potential, and ready to take ownership of their learning. It approaches children as unique individuals who live and learn within families and communities.

1.2 The program aims to provide every child with the kind of support he or she needs in order to develop:

- self-regulation;
- health, well-being, and a sense of security;
- emotional and social competence;
- curiosity and confidence in learning; and
- respect for the diversity of his or her peers.

- *The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program, p. 2*

2. Fundamental Principles

The staff of Moosonee District School Area Board recognizes and supports six overarching principles for early learning programs:

- a) Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health.
- b) Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children.
- c) Respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion are prerequisites for honouring children’s rights, optimal development, and learning.
- d) A planned curriculum supports early learning.
- e) Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance.
- f) Knowledgeable, responsive early childhood professionals are essential.

- *Early Learning for Every Child Today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings. p. 5*

NOTE: Sections 3-8 below provide direction for each of the fundamental principles.

3. Foundation for Lifelong Learning, Behaviour, and Health

3.1 Early learning provides the underpinning for all future learning, behaviour, and health. The school offers programs for four- and five-year-olds based on current research and understandings

about early childhood brain development, the importance of active group learning, and the need to help students develop self-regulation skills.

3.2 Every child grows and develops in a number of interrelated areas—social, emotional, communication/language, cognitive, and physical. The early learning program provides opportunities that address the full range of each child’s developmental needs. These areas include music and drama, games, physical activity, language and mathematics activities, and cooperative activities with peers.

3.3 The Continuum of Development that is described in detail in *Early Learning for Every Child Today* identifies foundation or root skills that emerge and are practiced throughout the early years in each of the interrelated areas. These basic skills are important both in their own right and as foundations of later development.

3.4 Early learning experiences are crucial to the future well-being of children, and establish the foundation for the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will affect later learning and behaviour.

4. Partnerships with Families and Communities

4.1 Partnerships with families and communities enhance learning. The school will engage parents and the community through meetings, workshops, and conversations about children’s thinking and learning.

4.2 Parents are their child’s first and most powerful teachers and role models. They support the child by listening and responding to what he or she says, reading to the child, having discussions, and modelling reading and writing at home. Knowing their child as well as they do, parents are able to provide early childhood educators and teachers with important information that helps them meet the child’s individual learning needs. At the same time, parents can learn by discussing the child’s interests, needs, and progress with educators and by watching and listening to educators interact with children.

[The Appendix provides suggestions about ways to encourage parent involvement. It is very important to engage parents when their children first enter school in the early years.]

4.3 Active family engagement can include involvement in the school, volunteering in classrooms or in organizing school events, helping children learn at home, and participating with the school staff in decision-making.

4.4 It is essential for early learning educators to work with members of the local school community in order to develop familiarity with the community’s unique characteristics, strengths, and needs, and the opportunities it affords for learning. At the start of the school year, teachers and families may collaborate with other significant education partners, such as the staff in early childhood centres and school and community resource teams, to ensure that the child experiences as smooth a transition to the school environment as possible. Throughout the year, a welcoming and inclusive approach empowers community members to become ongoing partners in the child’s education.

5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

5.1 The Ontario equity and inclusive education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating the discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of children to learn, grow, and contribute to society.

5.2 All children are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

5.3 Every child is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. In an inclusive education system, all children see themselves reflected in the program, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences.

5.4 Early learning–kindergarten teams can give children a variety of opportunities to learn about diversity and diverse perspectives. By drawing attention to the contributions of women, the perspectives of various ethno-cultural, religious, and racial communities, and the beliefs and practices of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples, they enable children from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

5.5 It is essential that learning activities and materials used to support the full-day early learning–kindergarten program reflect the diversity of Ontario society. In addition, teachers should differentiate instruction and assessment strategies to take into account the background and experiences, as well as the interests, aptitudes, and learning needs of all children. - *The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program. pp. 41-42*

6. Planned Curriculum

6.1 The early learning–kindergarten program consists of a balance of:

- exploration or investigation;
- guided instruction; and
- explicit instruction.

6.2 When children are exploring and investigating, the early learning–kindergarten team will observe, listen, and question in order to provide the children with the support they need, using the instructional strategy of scaffolding.

6.3 In guided instruction, learning experiences will be thoughtfully planned and guided by team members.

6.4 Explicit instruction is used to clarify steps, extend an idea in a particular direction, or demonstrate a skill that may be used in a broader context. For example, if a teacher is using a fairy tale to demonstrate retelling, it is critical that the children understand that they are learning about the skill of retelling and not about fairy tales.

6.5 Assessment is the key to effective teaching and is the starting point for instruction in the early learning–kindergarten program. A well-planned program provides early learning–kindergarten teams with many opportunities for ongoing observation and assessment of children’s strengths, needs, and interests.

6.6 On the basis of this ongoing assessment, teachers will plan instruction to help children build on what they know and extend their thinking. For example, team members might pose open-ended questions, give a direction, ask a child to demonstrate a familiar concept in a new way, or encourage a child to try a new activity. - *The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program. p. 12*

7. The Importance of Play

7.1 The school will deliver the early learning program through play-based learning which values children’s thinking, their dialogue, conversations, actions, processes, and reflections. There is a strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition, literacy, numeracy, and social, physical, and emotional skills. When children are

manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with various materials, they are engaged in learning through play.

7.2 Early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers demonstrate mathematical problem solving in the classroom, pose questions, provide opportunities for children to pose questions, and provide time for investigating possible answers. Children identify different sizes and shapes, create patterns, make comparisons and observations involving numbers, and explore mathematics in play, daily routines, and classroom experiences.

7.3 The development of oral language is a very important part of the junior kindergarten and kindergarten programs. Oral language is the basis for literacy, thinking, and relating in any language. All young children need play experiences that help them understand, acquire, and build on oral language. The early learning program must be rich in language-oriented activities and resources that build on prior knowledge, that are relevant to the lives of young children, and that provide opportunities for thinking, problem solving, and experimenting.

7.4 Educators need to be familiar with the stages in the process of learning to read and write, and use this knowledge when planning literacy programs and assessing children's acquisition of literacy skills. In the earliest stages of literacy development, children mimic the reading process. They learn that what they say can be written down. As children progress, they learn to pay attention to the way print and books work, and they learn that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language. They become aware that some words rhyme or start or end in the same way, thus developing phonological awareness. They also begin to share their ideas and responses to texts in a variety of ways, learn that writing can communicate a message, and begin to explore different purposes for writing. When they begin to write, they include pictures and symbols and, eventually, familiar or high-frequency words. - *Section 7 is summarized from The Full-Day Early Learning– Kindergarten Program and from Early Learning for Every Child Today.*

8. Knowledgeable Educators

8.1 It is essential for educators in the early learning program to have knowledge about and responsiveness to the developmental levels and characteristics of four- and five-year-old children.

8.2 The principal is an integral part of the early learning program, working in partnership with the kindergarten staff and parents to ensure that every child has access to the best early learning experiences. The principal will ensure that the program is based on research-informed, pedagogically sound, developmentally appropriate practices that support all children and their families.

8.3 Principals also play an important role in building professional learning communities that promote collaboration, reflection, and growth, and that enhance teaching and learning in all areas of the early learning program.

8.4 The principal ensures that open lines of communication exist between the school, parents of children in the program, and the community. - *The discussion of the role of the principal is from The Full-Day Early Learning– Kindergarten Program, pp. 10-11.*

8.5 Kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators work together as a team to identify the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child.

8.6 Teachers are responsible for the long-term planning and organization of the early learning program and management of the class. In addition, teachers are responsible for student learning;

effective instruction; formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation, based on the team's assessments of children's progress; and formal reporting and communication with families.

8.7 Early childhood educators bring their knowledge about age-appropriate program planning to facilitate experiences that promote each child's physical, cognitive, language, emotional, social, and creative development and well-being. Early childhood educators contribute to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and evaluation of the children's learning. - *The discussion of the role of the teacher and ECE is from The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program, pp. 7-8.*

9. Overall and Specific Learning Expectations

9.1 Overall Expectations:

- a) Children in the early learning program are expected to demonstrate achievement of the overall expectations set out in The Full-Day Early Learning—Kindergarten Program for each of the six areas of learning by the end of two years in the program. The six areas are: personal and social development, language, mathematics, science and technology, health and physical activity, and the arts.
- b) Since children entering the program vary in their levels of development and previous learning experiences, it is likely that they will demonstrate a considerable range of achievement as they progress towards meeting the overall expectations by the end of the program. The expectations are not designed to address the two years of the program separately.

9.2 Specific Expectations:

- a) The specific expectations indicate in more detail what children may be expected to demonstrate as they progress through the early learning program. The specific expectations support each area of the overall expectations.
- b) Since not all young children will learn in the same way at the same time, the range of achievement of the specific expectations will vary according to each child's stage of development.

NOTE: The overall and specific expectations are set out in detail in the Ministry of Education document, *The Full-Day Early Learning—Kindergarten Program, pp.49-156.*

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kindergarten_english_june3.pdf

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS*Legal:*

Education Act, Section 24 Resident Qualification for Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten
Ontario Regulation 298 Operation of Schools, Section 11 Duties of Principals
Ontario Regulation 298 Operation of Schools, Section 20 Duties of Teachers
Ontario Regulation 224/10 Full Day Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten
Ontario Ministry of Education. Early Learning for Every Child Today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings. Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning. 2007
Ontario Ministry of Education. The Full-Day Early Learning—Kindergarten Program. Draft Version. 2010-2011
Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12
Ontario Student Record Guideline

Board:

Board Policy GOV-01 Board Philosophy, Goals, and Values
Board Policy GOV-03 Role of the Corporate Board
Board Policy GOV-04 Role of the Supervisory Officer
Board Policy GOV-07-0 Equity and Inclusive Education
Board Policy GOV-11 School Council: Parent and Community Engagement
Administrative Procedure 310 Ontario Student Record (OSR)

Ministry Resources:

Ontario Ministry of Education. Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education. (2008).
Ontario Ministry of Education. The K–12 School Effectiveness Framework: A support for school improvement and student success. (2013).
Ontario Ministry of Education. The Ontario Curriculum. Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten Program. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections: Scope and Sequence of Expectations (2014)

APPENDIX

INVITING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Invite parents to share information about available community resources.
- Talk with parents informally on the playground (if they pick up and drop off their children).
- Establish a parent network for newcomers at the school.
- Post a sign on the door to indicate drop-in times.
- Invite parents to come to the classroom to tell or read stories in their language, or to create dual-language books for the children.
- Invite parents or community members to participate in a classroom experience, such as cooking or planting a garden.
- Invite parents or community members to talk about their work/careers.
- Invite parents to volunteer in the classroom.
- Ask parents to bring in objects from home for the classroom, such as food containers, boxes, and newspapers or magazines (for the dramatic play centre).
- Encourage parents to serve on the School Council.
- Invite family and community members (e.g., Elders, grandparents, retired volunteers) to come in and share their stories.
- Plan a picnic with parents and family members on the school grounds or at a nearby park.
- Invite parents to join the class on visits to areas of interest in the community; for example, visit the local market, take photographs, and bring back various kinds of produce to use in vocabulary development.

- Ministry of Education. *The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program*. p. 10