

# EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

## Background

Early Childhood Services (ECS) refers to the broad system of programs that meet the developmental and special needs of young children before they enter Grade 1. Kindergarten refers specifically to the education program for children in the year prior to Grade 1. Kindergarten, although not mandatory, is an important component of Early Childhood Services.

The District is guided by Alberta Education and the Ten Principles of Programming (Kindergarten Program Statement – Alberta Education, 2008) and will be in harmony with the mission, beliefs and value statements of the Division.

In addition, through the permeation of Catholicity within the District, the kindergarten program is presented from a Catholic perspective with learning opportunities that intentionally invite and nurture a relationship with Jesus Christ. The integration of Catholic values into the total kindergarten curriculum forms a Christ-centred environment which supports the spiritual dimension of learning.

The focus of Early Childhood Services is the development of the child's sense of self-worth and dignity. The emphasis will be on providing experiences that promote the complete development of the child in all areas of growth, including physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual.

Flexible Pathways is an Early Intervention Program specifically tailored to meet the individual needs of each child. Elements of the program include faith-based curriculum, learning through play, early literacy and multi-disciplinary assessments, including outside referrals if necessary.

## Definition

Early Childhood Services 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.

## Procedures

1. Enrolment in an ECS program is voluntary.
2. The Principal shall administer the ECS program in the school.
3. Flexible Pathways
  - 3.1. Flexible Pathways is a program for children between the ages of two and a half (2 ½) to four and a half (4 ½) years who ~~may~~ have a severe developmental delay or a severe delay in speech and language.
  - 3.2. Staff utilize a wide variety of teaching strategies and methods including assistive technology and precision teaching to help each child develop to their potential.
  - 3.3. Flexible Pathways works collaboratively with agencies such as Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT service providers, CASA, Glenrose and pediatricians.
  - 3.4. Parents are invited to attend workshops to help address their child's needs.
4. ECS program funding is part of the K-12 funding model and available through Alberta Education on a weighted moving average.
5. Two years of Program Unit Funding (PUF) is available through a weighted moving average based on eligible children. (see Section 4.1)
6. Children attend their community school for their kindergarten program, which is consistent with Division inclusive education practices.

Reference: *Education Act*, SA 2012, c E-0.3, ss 3, 21, 32, 41-43, 197, 222  
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