

# EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 12, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Draft Early Years Policy

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Heather Raymond

## INFORMATION

This report is being brought to board for feedback on a draft early years policy (Appendix I) prior to posting on the District website for public input.

**Background:** To clarify the Board's support for early learning, a report suggesting proposed content for an early learning policy and a proposed process was taken to Planning and Policy Committee on April 14, 2009.

In preparing the report for Planning and Policy Committee, a review of policies in other major school boards in Alberta and in selected boards in other provinces was undertaken. Other than Toronto, which has an extensive early year policy, none of the other boards reviewed had policies. While these boards did not have policy, each board's website had descriptions of early learning programs offered.

Based on the background information and proposed content provided to Planning and Policy Committee, the administration was asked to draft a policy

**Rationale for Draft Policy:** Based on a review of the Toronto School Board Policy, research related to the early years and district context, a policy that acknowledges the importance of the early years, the link to healthy development and the opportunity for the District to connect with organizations that support families in these early years was drafted. The belief statements identify why early learning is of interest to school districts, what type of programming is developmentally appropriate, which partners are critical and what data will enable ongoing monitoring of such programming.

Such a policy would provide direction and coordination for the District's current early years offerings, which include full-day kindergarten, early education sites and early learning opportunities. The timing is fortuitous as Alberta Education has recently announced the creation of an Early Learning Branch. Also, it would provide a focus for the development of an early learning website that would better inform the community of District initiatives in the early years.

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APPENDIX I Draft Early Years Policy

# Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: \_\_\_\_.BP  
TOPIC: Early Years

EFFECTIVE DATE:  
ISSUE DATE:  
REVIEW DATE:

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## PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

Experience during the early years is critical for the child's physical, social, emotional language and cognitive development, and sets the foundation for his or her entire life. This influences later school success, economic opportunities, social-citizenry and health and well-being.

Healthy children most often emerge from healthy families, promoted by healthy communities. Research confirms that the quality of a child's experience before age six makes a substantial difference in healthy development.

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the importance of strong links between schools and preschool programming offered by community organizations. Connections with these organizations help better support children and families during the particularly sensitive ages and stages of child development.

### **The Board believes that:**

- The early years are critically important in providing a foundation for learning.
- Early learning opportunities contribute to school readiness and long-term educational success.
- Exemplary play-based programming that provides early literacy and numeracy opportunities and is responsive to individual needs of the child contributes to academic attainment.
- Strong partnerships between schools and preschool, Head Start and child care programs in district buildings enhances transition to formal schooling and subsequent engagement of families in schooling.
- Continued collaboration among schools, families and community are built through outreach, sharing of resources and joint participation.
- Research and assessment data, used to identify strengths and needs and to promote innovative practice in the early years, is essential for effective early years programming.

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### Reference(s):

JAA.BP – Educational Partnerships and Sponsorships  
*School Act*, Section 30 – Early Childhood Services Program