

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 24, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee K. Shipka, Chair, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee S. Huff, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee C. Ripley, Planning and Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed Early Years Policy

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Belina Pasula, Heather Raymond

RECOMMENDATION

That proposed Board Policy HGAJ.BP – Early Years Policy (Appendix I) be considered for the third time and approved.

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Background: The Board in considering the policy for the first and second time amended and approved the policy as revised (last bullet, bold text). The Board, in its Strategic Plan, has identified early learning as an area of focus. Consequently, it has introduced and supported various programs and actions in support of the early years. To provide direction and coordination for the various District offerings and actions, the Board supported the development of an Early Years Policy.

Process: The proposed policy (Appendix I) was drafted based on a review of policies in selected school jurisdictions in Alberta and other provinces and consultation. Other than the Toronto District School Board, none of the other boards reviewed had policies but all provided descriptions of early learning programs offered. A draft early years policy was taken to board for input (Appendix II) and revised accordingly. The revised version (Appendix III) was posted on the District website. A concerted effort was made to seek feedback from knowledgeable stakeholders by sharing at the Capital Region Services to Children Linkages Committee, at Success By 6, and by advising early year partners (e.g., ABC Head Start) of the posting and encouraging them to respond. A total of 112 responses were received on the web survey. Since the posting, the administration learned about, and reviewed, the St. Albert Protestant School district early years policy.

Based on input received from all stakeholders, through the website and meetings, the following changes were made to the draft policy posted on the web site:

- Social-citizenry was changed to social and civic life to increase clarity.
- A paragraph delineating the continuum of support, and thus rationale for identifying the years zero to 8, was included in the philosophical foundation statement.
- To underscore the importance of family involvement, a reference to the family as the child's first teacher was added.

- Preschools was added in front of play-based programming to clarify this methodology is for the years before children become students.
- Socio-emotional, communications and physical development was added to the description of play-based to more accurately describe what play-based entails.
- A bullet was added to the Board belief statements to more clearly link the family, community and District offerings that span the early years continuum.

These changes are highlighted in the proposed policy.

Conclusion: The proposed policy acknowledges the importance of the early years. It recognizes the critical role played by family and community partners during these years. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration among schools, families and community to maximize literacy development for all children. It describes the District's role in complementing family and community efforts and easing the transition to public schooling. This policy provides a clear message to the public and direction to the administration.

GC:ja

APPENDIX I	Proposed Early Years Policy
APPENDIX II	Draft Early Years Policy
APPENDIX III	Draft Early Years Policy Posted on District Website

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: HGAJ.BP
 TOPIC: Early Years

EFFECTIVE DATE:
 ISSUE DATE:
 REVIEW DATE:

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

Research confirms that experiences during the early years, zero to eight years, are critical for the child's physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development, and set the foundation for his or her entire life. They influence later school success, economic opportunities, **social and civic life**, health and well-being.

The District recognizes that the critical early years span a period from infancy through pre-school, kindergarten and primary grades. Edmonton Public Schools can enhance children's literacy and numeracy development by working with parent and community partners prior and subsequent to public school age eligibility.

The board recognizes **the importance of family as the child's first teacher**. It also recognizes that the community as the wider social environment, plays a significant role in enriching the experiences of children and families through the activities and services it offers.

The Board believes that:

- The early years are critically important in providing a foundation for learning.
- Child- and family-centered early learning opportunities that promote creativity contribute to school readiness and long-term educational success.
- Exemplary **preschools** with play-based programming provide **socio-emotional, communication and physical development** as well as early literacy and numeracy opportunities. They respond to children's individual needs and contributes to academic attainment.
- Strong partnerships between schools and preschools, other early learning programs (e.g., Head Start) and child cares support successful transition to formal schooling and parent engagement. Co-location of these programs in District schools is effective, convenient, and enhances school-community interaction.
- Continued collaboration among schools, families and community is 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. Differing approaches must be tracked to identify and encourage the most successful practices.
- The Board should access educational funding **such as early language learning and Program Unit Funding (PUF)** to provide early years programming that complements community programming and supports the transition to, **and in, the early years** of public schooling.

Reference(s):

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

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: ____BP
TOPIC: Early Years

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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-citizenship 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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JAA.BP – Educational Partnerships and Sponsorships
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PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

Research confirms that experiences during the early years, zero to eight years, are 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.

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the importance of strong links with families and between schools and preschool programming offered by community organizations. The community, through activities and services offered, plays a significant role in enriching the experiences of children and families.

The Board believes that:

- The early years are critically important in providing a foundation for learning.
- Child-centered, early learning opportunities that promote creativity 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.

Reference(s):

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