

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Background

The Division supports Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs to address the needs of children before they enter grade one.

The Division ensures access to developmentally and individually appropriate programming for children with special education needs before they enter grade one.

Definitions

Child means an individual who is eligible for ECS funding.

Children with mild or moderate disabilities/delays means children assessed as having mild or moderate cognitive disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, emotional/behavioural, physical, and medical or multiple disabilities or communication delays.

Children with severe disabilities/delays means children who meet the definition of severe disabilities/delays described in the Funding Manual for School Authorities.

Children with special education needs means children who have been identified as meeting the criteria for mild, moderate or severe disabilities/delays or those who are gifted and talented.

Kindergarten is the ECS program for the year prior to grade one.

Specialized assessment means individualized measurement across a variety of domains and specific learning context for the purpose of providing individualized programming for children. Specialized assessment includes assessment of intellectual, personality/emotional, behavioural, communication, and physical development relevant to children's learning and performance.

Procedures

1. The program shall serve children prior to grade one, and in the case of children with special needs, up to three (3) years prior to grade one entrance age.
2. The entry age is set in accordance with Alberta Education funding eligibility.
3. Registration in ECS programs is voluntary.
4. Programming and services are designed around the assessed individual needs of children and are provided within a developmentally appropriate context by knowledgeable, skilled and qualified staff. Certificated teachers provide/oversee ECS programming in schools.

5. The Principal or designate is responsible to ensure that a child who is determined to be in need of special education programming shall have access to individually appropriate programming and services based on an Individualized Program Plan (IPP).
6. Specialized assessments are conducted by specialists employed by the Division, contracted specialists or by Alberta Health Services' qualified personnel.
7. The Division shall ensure:
 - 7.1 That educating children with special education needs in inclusive settings in local schools shall be the first placement option considered in consultation with parents and school staff.
 - 7.2 The most enabling placement, in a manner consistent with provincial special education policies, in consultation with parents, and based on current assessment data.
 - 7.3 Collaboration with families, other funding agencies, and service providers to coordinate service delivery.
8. Accountability for programming for ECS children with special education needs is established through adherence to administrative procedures, reporting to parents, and program monitoring and evaluation.
9. The Principal shall ensure that special education programming is appropriate and administered in accordance with internal and external parameters. They will work collaboratively with Divisional staff and service providers.
10. The Principal shall ensure that resources allocated to children with special education programming needs are expended on them.
11. The kindergarten program is run according to Alberta Education funding and program specifications.
12. A kindergarten program may be part of the English Immersion, or alternative program, but will adhere to Alberta Education age guidelines and funding parameters.
13. Transportation of students is provided in accordance with Alberta Education funding and Board policy.

Adopted/Revised: JUN 2016/NOV 2019/OCT 2021

Reference: Section 3, 11, 17, 18, 33, 52, 53, 197, 222 Education Act
Early Childhood Regulation 31/2002
Funding Manual for School Authorities
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Standards for Special Education
Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education
Kindergarten Program Statement