



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

STUDENT LEARNING SERVICES

# Early Years GUIDING DOCUMENT

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[www.epsb.ca](http://www.epsb.ca)

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## VISION

All students will learn to their full potential and develop the ability, passion and imagination to pursue their dreams and contribute to their community.

## MISSION

We work with families and community partners to provide safe, caring, healthy, diverse, inclusive and equitable learning experiences that engage students to achieve their full potential in an increasingly interdependent world.

## 2011 – 2014 DISTRICT PRIORITIES

- Provide supports and programs that will enable all students to complete high school.
- Deepen students' understanding of equity and empathy as key citizenship traits.
- Ensure all students and their families are welcomed, respected, accepted and supported in every school.
- Promote health and wellness for all students and staff.
- Listen to staff, honour their contributions, and support their opportunities for collaboration, growth and professional development.

## OUR GOAL

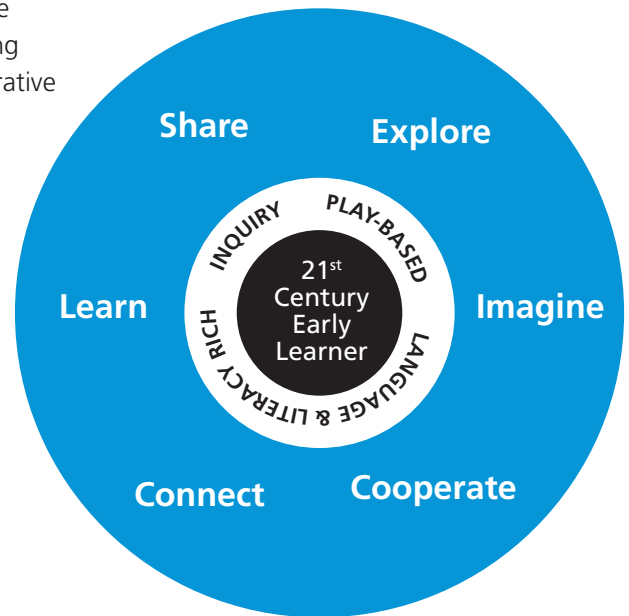
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At Edmonton Public Schools, we are committed to developing a clear and consistent understanding of appropriate, inquiry play-based practices that allow children to realize their potential. We are focused on ensuring they have equal access to the diverse opportunities, experiences and resources that will afford them the very best start in life.

Providing a learning environment where children and their families feel they belong is the collaborative responsibility of district staff. Working together, we can assist all children in developing a wide range of abilities which will help them to one day complete high school with the competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. These abilities are foundational, and include: emotional understanding and self-regulation; language and communication; and cooperative play and physical skills. Each plays a critical role in allowing children to acquire competencies in six core areas: explore, imagine, cooperate, connect, learn and share. Children's strengths are built in an inclusive, inquiry play-based, language and literacy rich environment that enhances learning and supports successful transition through the early childhood years and beyond.

### In support of our goal:

- Each child will engage in daily inquiry play-based learning experiences that extend and support language and literacy.
- Each child in need of specialized supports and services will receive appropriate programming and support through a play-based approach.
- Each teacher will provide a child-centered, inquiry play-based learning environment that is attentive to all aspects of children's growth and abilities and is consistent with the ideas and principles outlined in this guiding document.



### Competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Early Learner

“The work in early learning classes must be seen by everyone in the school as the foundation for the success of learners in subsequent grades.”

*Dr. Joe Pascarelli, renowned expert on educational leadership and mentorship*

## OUR BELIEFS

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The early years, from birth to age eight, are foundational for future success. We believe:

- Play is a vital part of this learning experience, as it helps to nourish all aspects of development: intellectual, social, physical and emotional.
- Exemplary inquiry play-based environments are purposefully created to support and respond to the needs of the child.
- Family is the child's first and most important teacher and each child brings their own unique socio-cultural experiences to the classroom environment.

### Guiding principles

The principles below are taken from *Alberta Education's Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning (Kindergarten to Grade 3)*. These statements reflect core beliefs and considerations to guide early years teachers in their work with children.

**Principle 1:** Childhoods differ depending on social and cultural circumstances.

**Principle 2:** Children's development is influenced, but not determined by their early experiences.

**Principle 3:** Children interact and learn in a variety of contexts.

**Principle 4:** Children are co-constructors of knowledge and partners in learning.

**Principle 5:** Children are unique and active contributors to their learning.

**Principle 6:** Children construct and represent knowledge in a variety of ways.

**Principle 7:** Children are citizens and active participants in school and society.

**Principle 8:** Children are active collaborators in and users of assessment.

**Principle 9:** Children may require specialized programming and supports to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.

**Principle 10:** Children and their families may need coordinated community services to meet their needs.



“ Play expands intelligence, stimulates the imagination, encourages creative problem-solving, and helps develop confidence, self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning. ”

*Dr. Fraser Mustard, International expert on early childhood development*

## QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

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Our educational practices are shaped by a strong focus to create learning environments that honour the unique individuality of each child and nurture their growth in body, mind and spirit:

- Educators create inclusive environments that immerse young children in language, literacy, joy and playfulness.
- Educators work from a child-centered, strength-based perspective. The child's knowledge and experiences provide the foundation for further learning.
- Educators facilitate meaningful experiences that connect to every-day life and encourage young children to initiate and engage in authentic learning and problem solving to expand their view of the world.
- Educators provide opportunities for children to continue to develop self-regulation and emotional awareness.
- Educators use authentic assessment to document, describe and interpret the learning of children. Assessment is unobtrusive and aligned with the Early Years beliefs and principles.
- Educators provide rich and varied opportunities that recognize children learn and develop at different rates and in different ways.
- Educators respect social and cultural values and practices of families, invite multiple perspectives and celebrate the diverse communities to which young children belong.
- Educators understand that oral language is foundational to thinking, reading and writing, and provide an environment which allows children to naturally communicate with other children and adults.



“ Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate and purposeful in creating play-based learning environments – because when children are playing, children are learning. ”

***Council of Ministers of Education, Canada***

# EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS

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Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the importance of providing enriching experiences in the early years through the following programs:

**Early education** is typically a two year program for children with severe special needs who are at least 2 ½ as of September 1 and a one year program for children with mild/moderate special needs who are at least 3 ½ as of September 1. Programming focuses on cognitive, self-help and social skills, speech and language and motor development. While the third and final year of Program Unit Funding for children with severe special needs is usually used to provide support for children in their community Kindergarten, each child's needs are considered on an individual basis and, as a district of choice, parents will be provided a variety of options. Community children are also welcome if space is available.

**Early learning** is a one year program for children 3 ½ years of age as of September 1. This program serves children, including English language learners and those with special needs, who live in the designated attendance area. Programming focuses on developing communication and co-operative learning skills.

**Kindergarten** is offered as a half-day morning or afternoon program at most elementary schools for children who are 4 ½ as of September 1. Children may attend their designated school or apply to a program of choice. Although it is not mandatory for parents to send their children to Kindergarten, it is strongly encouraged, as it teaches language, motor, social and other readiness skills important for later success in school.

Full-day Kindergarten is offered at some elementary schools for children who are 4 ½ as of September 1 and living in the designated attendance area. Pre-literacy skills, pre-numeracy skills, social skills, fine and gross motor skills, language development and group learning skills are some of the focus areas of full-day Kindergarten.

**Grades 1 to 3** – all children are required to attend school beginning in Grade 1. Children may attend their designated school, district centre special education program or a program of choice.



“ A child's learning environment should be one where it is safe to take risks and test their own abilities within a caring setting. Learning is an emotional, as well as an intellectual process. ”

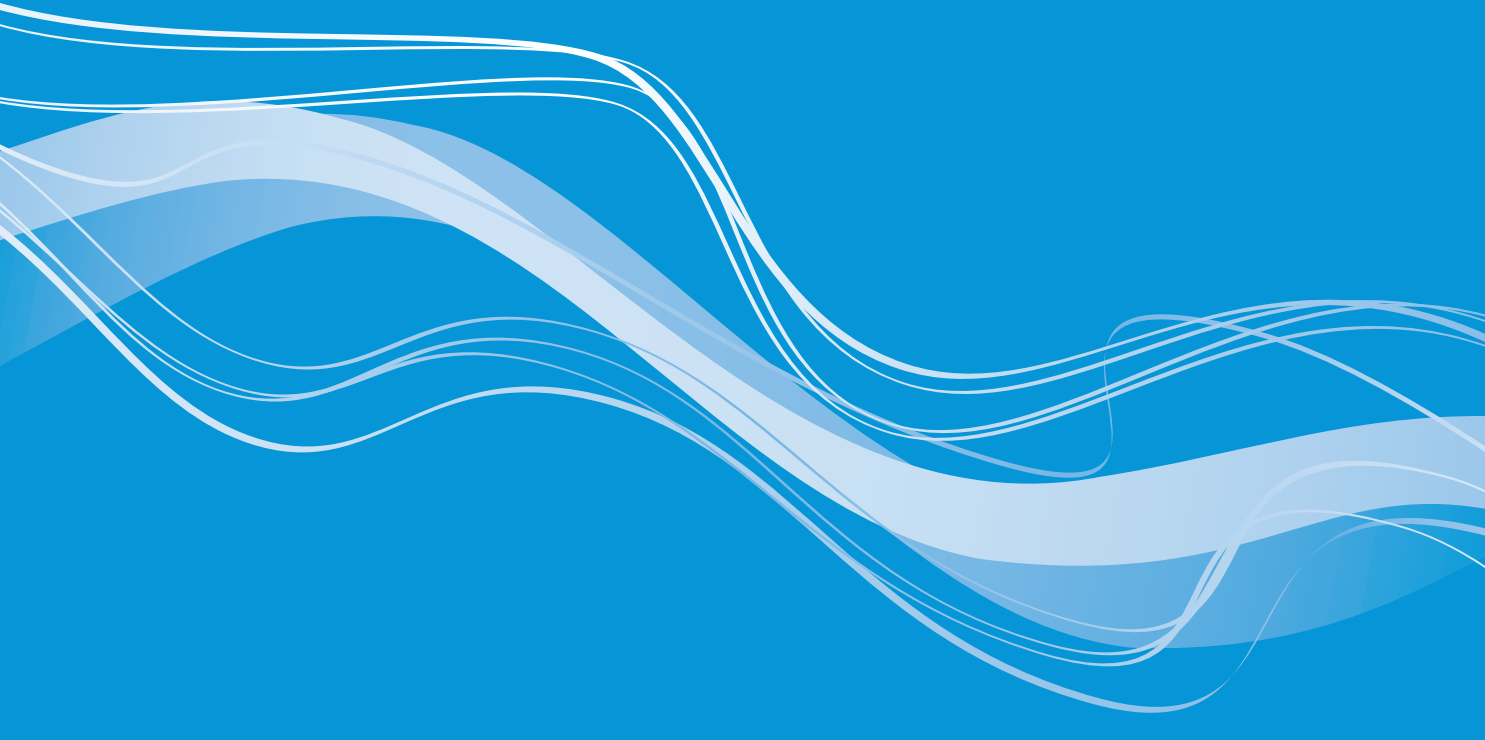
*Dr. Robbin Gibb, Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience*

## RESOURCES

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- **Alberta Education**
  - **Primary Programs (Kindergarten – Grade 3)**  
[education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/ecs/ppp.aspx](http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/ecs/ppp.aspx)
  - **Programs of Study (Kindergarten – Grade 3)**  
[education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/ecs/programs.aspx](http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/ecs/programs.aspx)
  - **Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education**  
[education.alberta.ca/media/452316/ecs\\_specialedstds2006.pdf](http://education.alberta.ca/media/452316/ecs_specialedstds2006.pdf)
- **Galileo Network- Early Learning**  
[www.galileonetwork.ca/earlylearning](http://www.galileonetwork.ca/earlylearning)
- **Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development**  
[www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com)
- **Competencies of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner Diagram**  
[tinyurl.com/baxzco2](http://tinyurl.com/baxzco2)
- **Council of Ministers of Education, Canada: Statement on Play-Based Learning**  
[www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/282/play-based-learning\\_statement\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/282/play-based-learning_statement_EN.pdf)





In over 200 locations throughout the city,  
Edmonton Public Schools is helping to shape the future.  
We're focused on ensuring our 80,000 students learn to their  
full potential and develop the ability, passion and imagination  
to pursue their dreams and contribute to their community.

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