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I. **Definitions**

- 1. **Early Childhood Services (ECS):** Programming offered by school authorities prior to compulsory schooling that meets the diverse needs of young children and their families. (Guide to Education)
- 2. **Extended Early Childhood Services:** Services for identified children whose needs warrant more than one year (up to three years) of Early Childhood Services. These services can be provided in Community based preschool programs, in Day Cares, in site based Early Learning programs or in Kindergarten programs.
- 3. **Kindergarten:** Part of the ECS continuum of programs and refers specifically to the education program for children in the year prior to Grade 1. (Guide to Education)
- 4. **Community Preschool Programs:** Preschool programs operated and facilitated by community boards. The Division's Early Learning teachers provide consultative support for the programs in general and specific guidance for the development of Individualized Programs for PUF students and Mild Moderate students.
- 5. **Day Cares:** Privately operated services that may include PUF students. The Division's Early Learning teachers may provide consultative support for the Early Learning programs in general. Specific guidance for the development of Individualized Programs for PUF students is provided.
- 6. **Early Learning Programs:** Site based, Early Learning programs created, operated and coordinated by the Division's Early Learning team, a division of Education Services. These programs are contained within the physical space of a community school and are staffed entirely by Division employees.
- 7. **Program Unit Funding (PUF) Students:** Students with identified characteristics that warrant specific programming as described in the Program Unit Funding section of the Alberta Education "Funding Manual for School Authorities".
- 8. **Mild Moderate Students:** Students whose identified characteristics are recognized for specific supports as described in the "Funding Manual for School Authorities".
- 9. **Typical Students:** Students with no identified characteristics recognized for specific supports as described in the "Funding Manual for School Authorities".

II. **Kindergarten Programs**

- 1. Kindergarten, as part of ECS programming, will operate at each of the various elementary school centres and shall be planned and implemented to help children achieve the learner expectations outlined in the Kindergarten Program Statement.

2. The guiding principles within the Kindergarten Program Statement (English and French versions) are the basis of all ECS programs. Additionally, these program statements describe the learning that is foundational for future learning and development.
3. Division ECS programs will provide access to a minimum of 475 hours of instructional program activities for each child during a school year. (See the Guide to Education for definitions of what does and does not constitute instructional time.)
 - 3.1. For individual children, modification to these hours based on the child's developmental level and educational needs is possible and should be recorded in the child's individualized program plan.
 - 3.2. A school may use a maximum of 35 hours of instructional time for activities, such as:
 - 3.2.1. visits to the child's home
 - 3.2.2. staggered entry
 - 3.2.3. small group days
 - 3.2.4. demonstration of child learning in child–parent–teacher conferences (child must be in attendance)
4. **Entrance Requirements (Enrolment)**
 - 4.1. Any child whose fifth birthdate falls on or before December 31 of the school year is eligible to attend Kindergarten (English or French).
 - 4.1.1. Children with disabilities and funded under current Alberta School Grant Regulations may be eligible for an ECS program prior to their fifth birthday (see Section III Early Learning Programs, below).
 - 4.2. Every child whose sixth birth date falls before September 1 must attend school unless excused pursuant to the *Education Act*.
 - 4.2.1. A child who turns 6 after September 1, but prior to January 1, is eligible for enrolment in a school operated by the Division on the first operational day of the school year during which the birth date occurs. Exceptions will be made for special needs and developmentally immature children.
 - 4.3. Children shall enter school (including Kindergarten) at the beginning of the program year. With the exception of transfers-in resulting from families moving into the geographic area, no mid-year entries are normally accepted.
 - 4.4. A decision to enrol a child in a Kindergarten program for more than one year will be made jointly by the teacher and the school principal in consultation with the parent and the Director of Student Services.

III. Extended Early Childhood Services

1. The Division will extend Early Childhood Services beyond one year of Kindergarten to support children with identified special needs.
 - 1.1. Under Alberta Education Early Childhood Services Policy 1.1.3, children identified with disabilities/delays are eligible for up to three years of ECS programming, depending on age, severity of the disability/delay and its impact on the child's ability to function within an ECS environment.

- 1.2. The Division will apply the conditions and definitions described in the document “Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education”, which applies to children who meet the eligibility criteria for special education programming.
2. **Identification and discovery of children with needs.** Intentional strategies and activities are employed to help identify children in the Division’s communities who have needs that can be effectively and efficiently served in an Early Learning setting.
 - 2.1. The Ages and Stages events and Family Oriented Programs, as well as assessments by professionals such as Speech and Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist, are examples of activities that help the Early Learning team assess the needs of children in the community.
3. The Division Early Learning team will provide guidance and support of pre-school aged children in **Community Programs** and **Day Cares** who are identified with varying developmental needs.
 - 3.1. The Division Early Learning Team will be led by a Principal at Large – Early Learning, and contain a necessary complement of certificated teachers and support staff to support the population.
4. **School-based, Division managed and operated Early Learning Programs:** The Division recognizes that professionally developed and supported programs offered in controlled, grouped settings have significant benefits for effective and efficient delivery of services for pre-school children with identified needs and that these services will have lasting and profound positive effects as the children enter and continue through Kindergarten to grade 12. The Division will operate and manage school-based Early Learning programs as a means to extend services and supports for pre-school aged children with identified needs, as per Alberta Education Early Childhood Services Policy 1.1.3.
 - 4.1. The size of the community’s population, the availability of physical space in the school, and the degree and extent of children’s need are all contributing factors when considering the creation and maintenance of an Early Learning program at a school site.
 - 4.2. Early Learning programs will operate in close collaboration with the school administration of the schools in which they exist. Collaboration will apply to planning for students, staffing decisions (when staff are shared), funding, and other resources.
 - 4.3. Early Learning programs will be administered by certificated teachers and managed and supervised by a centrally designated administrative position.
 - 4.4. Early Learning programs will incorporate “Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Childcare Framework for Alberta” (2015) as the guide for programming and everyday work with children and families.
 - 4.5. **Placement in Early Learning programs.** After children have been identified, a collaborative decision is made relative to placement in Early Learning programs.
 - 4.5.1. Early Learning programs will be operated under the same principles of Inclusion described in [AP 60-12 Inclusive Practices \(Student Placement and Other Programming Decisions\)](#).

- 4.5.1.1. While designed and intended to provide necessary supports to identified children (PUF and Mild/Moderate) a proportion of the groups in each setting shall include typically developing children.
- 4.5.2. The Early Learning principal, Early Learning teachers and the parents/guardians of the child will be involved in the decisions relative to placement.
- 4.5.3. The preferred location to serve the identified student is within a school (and or community program) which is geographically within the attendance area of the family's residence.
 - 4.5.3.1. The principal of the Early Learning programs has the authority to assign children and designate space in programs in an alternate community when the alternate location's program is deemed to increase the opportunity for student growth and development and to better meet the unique needs presented by the child.

4.6. Access to Early Learning Programs

- 4.6.1. When space is available in an Early Learning program as determined by the Early Learning principal, the school administrator and the Early Learning team, then parents of children (PUF, Mild/Moderate or Typical) from outside the attendance area may request placement in these programs.
 - 4.6.1.1. If granted access to an Early Education program outside of their attendance area, the parents/guardians will be informed that the subsequent registration into kindergarten must be in their designated school.
 - 4.6.1.2. Principals at both schools will also be informed that the student will be expected to register in their designated school when they begin kindergarten.
 - 4.6.1.3. Any additional expenses incurred to facilitate attendance to the program chosen and requested by parents/guardians will be assumed by the parents/guardians.

4.7. Funding Early Learning Programs: While Early Learning programs operate in designated schools, they are in effect, one program with several locations of service. As such, the Program Unit Funding and other revenue will be collected and managed as a Division Early Learning pool and distributed according to need determined by the Early Learning team in consultation with Regional Office and School Administration.

- 4.7.1. The primary source of funding is the Program Unit Funding, the processes for which are described in the Alberta Education "[Funding Manual for School Authorities](#)".
- 4.7.2. Secondary sources of funding for Early Learning programs include Mild Moderate funding and fees associated with the registration of Typical students.

- 4.7.3. The fee schedule for registration of Typical students in Early Learning programs is considered a School Determined Fee ([AP 30-06 Student Fees](#)).
5. All **transportation** decisions for Early Learning programs will align with the Administrative Procedures of the Division's Facilities and Transportation service area. (See the following Reference section for links to [AP 70-101](#), [AP 70-105](#), [AP 70-106](#), and [AP 70-120](#).)
 - 5.1. Children whom the "[Funding Manual for School Authorities](#)" has identified as eligible for transportation funding (PUF and Mild Moderate) can be transported by school system buses on their scheduled morning pick up and afternoon drop off routes.
 - 5.1.1. Transportation does not schedule mid-day bus runs; therefore, no mid-day transportation is available for children in Early Learning programs.
 - 5.2. Typically developing children who are enrolled in Early Learning programs are not eligible to be transported on Division buses.

Reference

[Education Act](#)
[Early Childhood Services Regulation, AR 87/2019](#)
[Alberta Education Funding Manual for School Authorities](#) (Section 1.1)
[Alberta Education Guide to Education](#)
[Early Learning Curriculum Framework \(2015\)](#)
[Kindergarten Program Statement 2008](#)
[Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Childcare Framework for Alberta](#)
[Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education](#) (Policy 1.1.3 – page 23)
[AP 30-06 Student Fees](#)
[AP 60-12 Inclusive Practices \(Student Placement and Other Programming Decisions\)](#)
[Form 6-12-A Protocol to Transition Children and Youth in Care into School Placements](#)
[AP 70-101 Emergency School Closing \(Threats, Inclement Weather, Power Failures and Water Shortage](#)
[AP 70-105 Student Transportation Services – Rules, Responsibilities and Student Discipline Process](#)
[AP 70-106 Bus Scheduling and Routing](#)
[AP 70-120 Student Transportation in Private Vehicles](#)
[AP 70-126 Parent Provided Transportation](#)
[Exhibit – PHRD Rubric on Inclusive Practice 2012](#)
[Exhibit – Quick Guide for Indicators for PHRD Rubric on Inclusive Practice](#)