



“Everyone Learning Together”
LEARNING LEADERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

Early Childhood Services Handbook

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1. ECS Programs

The purpose of ECS programs are to provide learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate in order to meet the diverse needs of children and promote a positive attitude toward lifelong learning. Early Childhood Services (ECS) refers to the broad coordinated system of local and provincial programs that meet the developmental and special needs of young children aged 2.5 years to 5 years, and their families.

ECS programs are made available to the families within Prairie Rose School Division #8 in a variety of contexts. These may include:

1. Kindergarten – public (PRSD) or private (community) programs
 - PRSD Kindergarten programs offer full day every other day programs (1/2 time – 475 hours) in each of our schools offering Kindergarten. In the spring of 2006, the Board passed a motion indicating that the option of full time programs (950 hours) should be explored in each of the schools where numbers warrant. It is expected that strong support for a full time program is obvious and sustainable before this be considered as an option. No parent shall be forced to enroll their child in a full time program.
2. Junior Kindergarten (PRSD) or pre-school or play-school (community) programs.

The PRSD School Board formally implements Junior Kindergarten programs where needs and numbers warrant. Although this has not been exactly specified, the reason that PRSD supports Junior Kindergarten programs is for the benefit of students who are defined as “at risk”. This generally refers to severe special needs and ESL children. Such programs may be available in the following communities:

Bow Island, Burdett, Foremost, Irvine, Redcliff and Seven Persons

The Board supports these specific programs as “first choice” for children residing in the PRSD attendance areas. The Board recognizes that there may be circumstances that are more convenient for parents in regards to programming within the city of Medicine Hat. The position of PRSD is to support parent choice, to a point. PRSD Junior Kindergarten programs may not offer maximum hours of programming for some special needs children. As a result, PRSD will support ADDITIONAL hours of programming in PARTNER preschools in Medicine Hat with the PRIOR approval of the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs in consultation with parents, partner preschools and the special needs team.

According to the Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education:

“Appropriate educational programming for young children with special education needs is based on meeting children’s educational needs within the most enabling environments.

School authorities should allow for flexibility in settings, and the number of centre-based hours and family-oriented programming sessions. Educational programming should be provided in natural settings to the greatest extent possible. Regardless of the setting educational programming for ECS children with special education needs varies in the number of hours provided, based on the children's needs and developmental levels and taking into account parental preferences and local resources.

Requirements for Settings and Levels of Programming (Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education):

12. School authorities must:

a. determine, in consultation with parents, the most enabling setting for the delivery of educational programming in a manner consistent with the developmental needs of children, local resources and safety of the children and staff..."

These Medicine Hat preschool partners include:

Busy Bees Preschool, Building Blocks, Dragons and Butterflies and KidsPlay

Children with special needs may be eligible for these programs and/or alternative programming such as in-home programs. For further information, contact the PRSD Coordinator of Student Services - Primary Programs at 527-5516 ext. 2309. See Administrative Procedure Manual, Section A1.

There are ten guiding principles that provide a framework for Kindergarten programming (Kindergarten Program Statement 2008):

1. Children differ depending on social and cultural circumstances.
2. Children's development is influenced but not determined by their early experiences.
3. Children interact and learn in a variety of contexts.
4. Children are co-constructors of knowledge and partners in learning.
5. Children are unique and active contributors to their learning.
6. Children construct and represent knowledge in a variety of ways.
7. Children are citizens and active participants in school and society.
8. Children are active collaborators in and users of assessment.
9. Children may require specialized programming and supports to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.
10. Children and their families may need coordinated community services to meet their needs.

2. Age of Eligibility

Eligibility Type	Code	Minimum Age as of Sept. 1 of Program Year
Regular Kindergarten Child	200	4 years 6 months
Developmentally immature	10	5 years 6 months
Junior Kindergarten Child		3 years 6 months
Mild/moderate or gifted and talented	30/80	3 years 6 months
Severe disability (PUF)	40's	2 years 6 months

Can my child enroll in a second year of kindergarten?

Response: (Alberta Education / School Act)

A child may be enrolled for a second year only if s/he is determined to be "developmentally immature". A developmentally immature child is of compulsory age for grade one who, in the opinion of his/her parent and board, would benefit from an additional year of ECS programming. The parent and board must jointly agree that the child would benefit by continuation in an ECS program. A child with special education learning needs is not considered eligible for a second year of Kindergarten. This child is less than 7 years on September 1 and must not have been previously coded as a special needs child.

School secretaries and ECS teachers considering applying a code 10 to a student must consult with their Principal, Coordinator of Students Services - Primary Programs and the Secretary-Treasurer before applying this code to the SIS system. This code is rarely used. This is an exception to the age of mandatory entrance to grade one as defined in The School Act.

3. Funding Criteria and Timelines

- A. Base Instruction funding is provided for all eligible ECS children registered by September 30. Refer to Education Funding in Alberta for further details.
- B. Mild/Moderate funding is provided for children who have a mild/moderate disability or delay. Refer to Education Funding in Alberta for further details. These disability/delays can include cognitive, emotional/behavioral, hearing, visual, communication, physical, medical and multiple disabilities. See the Procedural Handbook for Special Education Programs and either the school special needs lead teacher or the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs for more detailed information regarding coding criteria. All children must be registered with Alberta Education in the SIS system by September 30. Kindergarten children have until April 30 of the current year to be coded. Preschool children must be coded by September 30. Contact the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs for further information.

- C. Program Unit Funds (PUF) are provided for children with severe disabilities/delays who require additional support beyond that offered in the regular ECS program. Refer to Education Funding in Alberta for further details. Generally, supports provided by Speech/OT/PT/Behaviour Interventionists as well as Teacher Assistants are necessary for a student to be successful in the classroom. Formalized assessments and/or diagnoses are required. See the Procedural Handbook for Special Education Programs and either the school classroom support teacher or the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs for more information. Applications are completed by the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs and students with similar needs in common programs may be clustered into the same funding unit. Deadline for PUF applications to be submitted to Alberta Education is the last school day in December. Applications for children diagnosed or registered after this date must be completed by a March date as designated by Alberta Education.

Prior to applying for PUF funds, documentation is submitted by the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs to Alberta Education for pre-approval. Documentation may be submitted as early as May of the year prior to the program start. Pre-approval should be obtained for each child prior to implementing PUF programming. Refer to ECS Special Education Handbook for further information.

4. Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's ECS programs and should contact the teacher or Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs at PRSD for more information. Informed consent from parents should be obtained prior to the application process and coding of special needs children.

5. Fees for PRSD ECS Programs

Background: In the last couple of years, the ECS context has changed considerably with the Board adding Junior Kindergarten and Full Time Kindergarten programs. The concept of fees has become complex as well.

The original motion by the Board in regards to JK fees was that PRSD should charge the same as the community programs so that there might be more of a working together attitude and less of a competitive attitude. We are now at the point where some consistency among our own PRSD programs must be considered.

Half-time and full-time (or variations of) Kindergarten has clear administration guidelines in regards to fees. The current Board motion includes a fee for full program between \$180 - \$200 per year. Programs between 0.6 FTE and 0.9 FTE should pro-rate their fees accordingly.

You will see immediately that there is a difference in fee philosophies between JK and Kindergarten. JK is clearly considered to be early entry; early intervention is the main reason the Board agreed to begin this program. The intent of waiving fees is to ensure maximum participation in the program. The rationale for fees at Kindergarten is to provide a reasonable transition to fees from grades 1-12.

This table is intended to clarify the concept of ECS fees.

	PUF	MM	ESL	Community Children	Who keeps the student fees?	Who keeps the grants including special ed and basic student grant?
JK	No	No	No	\$5 per session	School	Division
Half-time K	Max \$50/year	Max \$50/year	Max \$50/year	Max \$50/year	School	School BSG and M/M Division - PUF
Full-time K	\$180 - \$200	\$180 - \$200	\$180 - \$200	\$180 - \$200	School	School BSG and M/M Division - PUF

6. Transportation

Bus transportation is provided for children attending Kindergarten programs in Prairie Rose. Transportation is not provided for community children in Junior Kindergarten Programs. Special needs students may qualify for transportation funding. The deadline to apply for transportation funding is November 30. Contact the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs for more information. Refer to Transportation Costs in [ECS Special Education Handbook](#).

7. Role of the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs

Provides the parent, ECS teacher and/or other instructional personnel with the knowledge, resources and support to meet the learning and developmental needs of ECS children considered eligible for Program Unit Funding (PUF) as a result of a severe disability as well as ECS children who have been identified as having a mild/moderate delay or disability. Collaborating with interventionists is a key component in providing knowledge, resources and support to ECS teachers and students.

8. Role of the Principal

To ensure that appropriate programming is provided for all funded children within the school. This includes but is not limited to the following practices:

- personnel hiring and supervision
- maintain appropriate documentation

- periodic reporting to parents
- evaluation of student progress

9. Role of the Teacher

- Teach the programs as prescribed by Alberta Education or PRSD #8
- To supervise all programming including sites outside of the classroom within the school setting
- To communicate regularly with all student support services
- To provide instruction competently to students
- Write and maintain IPP's in collaboration with the learning team
- Consult with Classroom Support Teacher and/or Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs in regards to completion of documentation, permission forms, etc
- Supervise and evaluate support staff in consultation with the Principal
- Regularly evaluate students
- Periodically report results to parents

10. Role of the Teacher Assistant

- Receives direction from the teacher with regard to planning and implementing programming
- Carries out the program identified by the teacher including providing health services and basic needs as necessary. Consult the PRSD Administrative Handbook Section B.5
- Asks for guidance, input, and support as needed
- Documents skill and concept development as outlined in the IPP
- Participates in team meetings as requested to enhance program delivery for students
- Communicates with the learning team **within the framework** established by the teacher
- For further details refer to the PRSD Administrative Handbook Section D.5.3

11. Role of the Interventionists

Speech and Language Pathologist

- Provide support to ECS students and their families
- Provide assessment and intervention to students with speech-language needs
- Assist teachers with strategies and classroom based interventions to promote communication opportunities for children
- Provide training and support to teachers, classroom support teachers and teacher assistants

Speech and Language Assistant

- To carry out speech and language programming to ECS students as directed by the Speech and Language Pathologist and classroom teachers
- Administration of screening tools
- Assistance with client assessment
- Intervention with individuals on a 1:1 basis or in groups as prescribed in a treatment plan
- Facilitation of communication and related skills in natural settings
- Observation and communication with the SLP regarding a client
- Assistance with the fabrication and maintenance of assistive communicationA
- Assistance with public education events

Behaviour Consultant

- To support students, schools and families regarding students with emotional and behavioural needs
- Work with school teams and other support services in the development of behaviour plans
- Assist teachers with the transition of students with special needs into the classroom
- Provide training and support to teachers, classroom support teachers and teacher assistants

Occupational Therapist

- Provide support to ECS children and their families
- Provide assessment and intervention to students with fine motor and sensory processing needs
- Assist teachers and teacher assistants with strategies and classroom based interventions to help develop fine motor skills and deal productively with sensory processing concerns in the classroom
- Provide training and support to teachers, classroom support teachers and teacher assistants

Physical Therapist

- Provide support to ECS children and their families
- Provide assessment and intervention to students with gross motor needs
- Assist teachers and teacher assistants with strategies and classroom based interventions to help develop gross motor skills in children
- Provide training and support to teachers, classroom support teachers and teacher assistants

12. IPP

All children who have a special education code shall have an Individual Program Plan in place. The writing, in collaboration with the learning team, and the implementation and management of the IPP is the responsibility of the classroom teacher. In programs where

ECS children are placed that don't include PRSD teachers, the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs will manage the IPP. Informed consent must be obtained by parents before any modifications to any regular program can be made. Parent input is strongly encouraged in the development of IPP goals. Prairie Rose School Division partners with many health care professionals to provide comprehensive services to students. These professionals may provide assistance with the development of IPP goals. See the school classroom support teacher and/or contact the Coordinator of Student Services – Primary Programs for more information or refer to the PRSD #8 Special Education Procedural Handbook.

13. Children with Behaviour Issues

Care should be taken to ensure for a safe and caring environment for all children. Maturity levels and previous experiences of ECS children vary considerably. Teachers should attempt to find out as much as possible about their students prior to their entry into the classrooms through screenings/parent interviews and home visits in an attempt to predict their needs and therefore prevent behavioral outbursts.

If teachers choose to use time outs with children they should refer to the Guidelines for using Time Out in Schools. Time outs should be considered as one of many strategies within a behaviour pyramid of interventions.

14. Home visits

Whenever possible home visits are recommended prior to programming for ECS children. Home visits give children an opportunity to meet the teacher in the security of their own home. The teacher is able to spend individual time with children and their families. Home visits can form the basis for developing positive and supportive relationships in the classroom.

15. Family-Oriented Programming Sessions (FOPS)

Family-oriented programming is individually planned, developmentally appropriate intervention for children with severe disabilities/delays and their families. It is designed to engage the child's parent(s) in a process that helps them to implement the goals and objectives of the IPP within the home and community environment. Family-oriented programming is done under the direction of a certificated teacher, takes place outside of centre-based programming hours and is based on a 1:1:1 service delivery model. PRSD offers parents the option of participating in center based activities with various interventionists and other parents and children and/or individual sessions with an interventionist.

16. Curriculum

For Kindergarten children refer to the Kindergarten Program Statement – Revised September 2008. A valuable tool to assist in planning is the Kindergarten Guide to Implementation 2000.

For younger ECS children including those in Junior Kindergarten and/or other programs refer to the Prairie Rose School Division #8 “Preschool Learner Outcomes.”

17. Resources

A variety of resource materials are available for loan from the PRSD office. Program Unit Funding or PUF Bins have been developed to support programming for special needs ECS children in the classroom. To borrow these materials please contact the Administrative Assistant for Special Education at the Division Office.