

DATE: January 26, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Sherry Adams, Policy Review Committee
Trustee Michael Janz, Policy Review Committee
Trustee Bridget Stirling, Chair, Policy Review Committee

SUBJECT: Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE STAFF: Rachel Foley, Ann Parker, Nancy Petersen, Natalie Prytuluk

REFERENCE: Board Policy CH.BP – Framework for Policy Development and Review

ISSUE

The Policy Review Committee is bringing Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years to the Board of Trustees at public Board for first reading.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools' Board of Trustees is committed to high quality early learning opportunities for children across Edmonton. The Board sets direction for early years programming through Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years. This policy is currently up for review.

RELATED FACTS

As part of its policy review process, the Board invited families, staff and community members to provide their perspectives through conversations about early childhood education in the spring of 2019 and reviewed current research related to early years programming. The draft policy also reflects the role of the Division as an early childhood service provider as set out by Alberta Education and the provincial funding manual.

After first reading the draft policy will be posted and a survey opened for final input from staff, families and members of the broader community. Feedback from the survey will be used to inform final work on the document prior to bringing it to the Board of Trustees for second, third and final reading.

This work by the Board of Trustees supports the following areas of the 2018-2022 District Strategic Plan:

- Priority 1: Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond.
- Priority 1 Goal 1: An excellent start to learning: More children enter Grade 1 reaching emotional, social, intellectual and physical developmental milestones.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years be introduced.
2. That Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years be read for the first time and approved for posting on the Division website for final stakeholder feedback.

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. Approve first reading of the policy.
2. Provide the Policy Review Committee with feedback to inform revision of the document to support approval of first reading at an upcoming Board meeting.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years is up for review. The draft policy being brought forward for first reading has been informed by stakeholder engagement, a review of current research for the early years and contextualized within the Division's role as one of many service providers within the community. After first reading at public Board, the policy will be posted for stakeholder feedback through an online survey.

In the Policy Review Committee's work plan, the intended timeline to have this policy work completed is the 2020-2021 school year. First reading is the first step towards achieving this timeline.

NEXT STEPS

The Policy Review Committee will take their next steps based on feedback from the Board of Trustees.

ATTACHMENTS AND APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Draft Board Policy GGAJ.BP Early Years

BS:rf

CODE: GGAJ.BP

EFFECTIVE DATE: (24-11-2009)

TOPIC: Early Years

ISSUE DATE: (29-06-2015)

REVIEW YEAR: (2016)

PURPOSE

To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) role in supporting the provision of early childhood services programs.

To support the Division's youngest learners to thrive within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment.

DEFINITIONS

Early Years Programming is the continuum of programs offered in Edmonton Public Schools for children under the age of six and for children as young as two years and eight months in alignment with requirements for Early Childhood Services under the *Education Act*.

- **Pre-Kindergarten** serving children who meet eligibility criteria as outlined by Alberta Education. Based on Alberta Education eligibility criteria, children may be eligible for funding for one or two years of Pre-Kindergarten before their Kindergarten year.
- **Kindergarten** serving all children in the year prior to Grade 1. In Edmonton Public Schools, Kindergarten is typically offered five half days per week though some full-day programs may be available to serve children living in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods.

POLICY

Research in the field of early childhood recognizes that the early years of a child's life have a profound and lasting impact on children's future learning and development. Young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning.

All children are curious and eager to learn. Children's families are their first and most important teacher. The Board recognizes that families play a significant role in children's learning, health, development and well-being and is committed to building strong relationships with families as critical partners in their children's learning.

The Board acknowledges that early childhood educators also have an important role in nurturing relationships among children, staff and families and is committed to providing positive experiences in the early years of a child's life. Additionally, the Board recognizes the effectiveness of early years programming for children and the positive long term impact this investment has for the broader society.

Early childhood programming provides early intervention, especially in key areas such as language, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, gross and fine-motor skills and early literacy and numeracy. The Board is committed to providing an excellent start to learning through the provision of early years programming that is responsive to the needs of all children.

Early childhood educators support the growth and well-being of young learners through a range of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive experiences using research and evidence-based approaches to learning. The Board is committed to providing early years programs and learning environments that are inclusive, nurturing and strength-based and support the diversity of languages, cultures, social circumstances and abilities of the children served. First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of knowing, being and doing will be reflected in both the learning environment and activities that support learning. The Board recognizes that the provision of high quality early years programming is supported by staff that have knowledge, skills, attitudes and expertise to work with the diverse needs of young children.

Strong early development and learning requires a relationship-based approach to nurture young children's sense of belonging as members of a community. Community stakeholders serve as important partners in the provision of early years programming in the Edmonton community. The Division values stakeholder's expertise, services and resources and collaborates to provide additional support for children and families.

The Board acknowledges the importance of strategic collaboration with various levels of government, including municipal and provincial, to advance funding, access and guidelines to support the needs of children and families in the community.

EXPECTATIONS

The Superintendent will implement this policy by assigning roles and responsibilities and through developing administrative regulations, processes and best practices.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Superintendent will provide updates to the Board around progress made in support of early years programming in Edmonton Public Schools.

The Division will provide an annual update on progress and priority strategies that support early years programming through the Annual Education Results Report.

REFERENCES

AA.BP Stakeholder Relations

AE.BP Welcoming, Inclusive, Safe and Healthy Learning and Working Environments

HAA.BP First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

Education Act Section 21

Early Childhood Services Regulation (Alberta Education)