

Toronto District School Board

Policy P022

Title: **Early Learning & Care Policy**
Adopted: October 28, 1998
Effected: October 28, 1998
Revised: February 7, 2018
Reviewed: February 7, 2018
Authorization: Board of Trustees

1.0 RATIONALE

The Toronto District School Board acknowledges that the early years of a child's life have a profound and enduring impact on their future learning and development and is committed to the success of children through strengthening early education and care. Engaging families in schools, from their child's birth and before Full-Day Kindergarten, establishes their sense of trust, social connectedness and investment in schools and local community.

The Board recognizes its important leadership role in the planning and delivery of a range of early learning experiences in schools and in fulfilling its legislative duties as defined in the *Education Act*, the *Child Care and Early Years Act* and the corresponding policies issued by the Ministry of Education.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

The early years are recognized as being critically important in supporting children's holistic development and in attaining the mission and values of the Board. This Policy provides forward-thinking principles and commitments that guide system planning, implementation, and improvement across a range of early years programs for children from birth to age 12. These include child care in schools, child and family programs, Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) and elementary education, and before- and after-school programs.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy:

Before- and after-school programs refers to programs in schools serving children between the ages of 3.8 and 12 years of age before the school day begins, and after it ends, as defined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (2014).

Board means the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the TDSB.

Child Care refers to licensed early learning and care programs for children from birth to 3.8 years of age.

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) are the service delivery agents for social assistance, childcare, and affordable and social housing. The Toronto Children's Services Division is the designated and legislated CMSM for child care and early years responsibilities for the municipality of Toronto.

Early Years refers to children from birth to age eight.

Families refers to the parents/guardians and other trusted adults who care for a child outside of school.

Educator refers to all TDSB employees and third-party service providers of early years programs (e.g., child care educators, Designated Early Childhood Educators, child and family program staff and supervisors, before-and after-school program staff, and school-board staff).

System refers to the broad range of early years programs, services and initiatives that serve all children and families in TDSB schools from birth to 12 years of age.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Education holds primary responsibility for overseeing this Policy. Within the Director's Office, responsibility for the day-to-day management and coordination of the Policy is assigned to the Executive Superintendent of Early Years.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies predominantly to all TDSB employees and third-party service providers involved in early years and child care programs in TDSB schools.

6.0 POLICY

6.1 Programs and Pedagogy:

- 6.1.1 Children are born learners, curious and capable, and important contributors in their learning. By planning responsive, inclusive and engaging programs, educators will capitalize on children's development in the early years.
- 6.1.2 Every child must always be seen, listened to and respected. Considering their age and maturity, a child's views can provide a valuable perspective to support child-centred decision-making, programming and pedagogy.

- 6.1.3 Recognizing that children have a diversity of early years experiences and abilities, educators will collaborate to meet their unique needs within their local school as much as possible.
- 6.1.4 As children transition to school it is understood that schools must be ready for children, rather than children being ready for school. In consideration of the various transitions children experience in the early years, educators must put children's needs first and be thoughtful in planning and implementing more seamless transitions.
- 6.1.5 Children's language, culture, abilities, beliefs, and experiences offer a rich opportunity to enhance their own, their peers, and their educator's learning.
- 6.1.6 Intentional play and inquiry are interconnected pedagogical approaches and are essential for children's learning from their pre-school experiences, and throughout elementary and secondary programs.
- 6.1.7 Learning environments will be thoughtfully co-created to engage children in a range of culturally reflective and responsive literacy and numeracy experiences.
- 6.1.8 Principals and educators must identify how their own biases, power and privilege might influence their actions, interactions and pedagogical practices and must adjust their behaviours accordingly.
- 6.1.9 The TDSB recognizes that Indigenous families and communities provide an important source of strength in the development of their cultural identity and self-knowledge in the early years. Effective programs, pedagogy and curriculum will integrate Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing.
- 6.1.10 Young children develop their individual identities and experience a true sense of belonging when families and staff work together to create safe, reflective and affirming environments that are respectful of their individual human rights.
- 6.1.11 Families will be engaged as critical partners in their children's learning. Staff and parents will cultivate reciprocal relationships where all voices are heard and respected in order to address biases and remove barriers that impede children's learning and development.

6.2 Relationships:

- 6.2.1 Families, communities, agencies, operators and all levels of government are important partners with school boards in the provision of early years programs including child care in schools. System leaders, individual

school principals and educators will maintain and enhance effective relationships with these partners in delivering early learning and child care programs.

- 6.2.2 School leaders, program supervisors and classroom educators have responsibility for co-creating the conditions necessary for productive working relationships to thrive among various early years professionals working in exclusive and shared space in schools.
- 6.2.3 The majority of Full-Day Kindergarten classrooms are comprised of designated early childhood educators and teachers. The effectiveness of the educator team's relationship directly impacts the quality of the program and children's learning.
- 6.2.4 Before- and after-school programs take place in shared space therefore staff in Authorized Recreation programs, and child care and school-based educators must be engaged in co-creating shared environments, and each considered when timetabling the use of multi-purpose rooms.
- 6.2.5 Families and communities play a significant role in children's learning, health, development and wellbeing. It is recognized that child and family wellbeing are often inextricably linked.
- 6.2.6 Respectful and responsive relationships with Indigenous communities are critical in informing the expansion of early years programs serving Indigenous children and families. The TDSB commits to ensuring the active engagement of Indigenous partners in the planning and delivery of responsive programs and services.
- 6.2.7 School-based educators will consult and collaborate with families and other professionals to facilitate the inclusion of children with special needs.
- 6.2.8 Children's relationships with their peers play a significant role in their sense of belonging and wellbeing. Given that children need to feel connected in positive ways to their peers, educators play an important role in nurturing peer-to-peer connectedness and relationships.
- 6.2.9 Protocols will be implemented to ensure superintendents, system and school leaders will have the information required to anticipate and address emerging operational and program needs and challenges.
- 6.2.10 Educators, school principals and system leaders will have opportunities to engage in critical reflection and inquiry and collaborative professional learning to support quality in early years programs.

6.3 Strategic System Leadership (Access, Stability, Continuity):

- 6.3.1 The Toronto District School Board will implement a system of before-and after-school care with the goal of offering a program in every school, system stability and continuity of relationships by:
- Minimizing the barriers some families face;
 - Expanding choice and flexibility;
 - Creating seamless experiences and consistent relationships for children within the legislative framework and on a cost-recovery basis.
- 6.3.2 Attention will be given to the most marginalized communities with a goal of improving access, equity and service excellence to all families.
- 6.3.3 Schools will serve as community hubs to improve accessibility and continuity of programming and service subject to approval by the Planning Department.
- 6.3.4 Partnerships will continue to be developed with all levels of government, where appropriate, to support the development, expansion and management of child and family programs and child care in schools.
- 6.3.5 Children and families will be better served through a more cohesive system of programs wherein continuity, quality and growth is strategically planned and implemented. It is recognized that ongoing joint planning with the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) is fundamental in this ongoing planning
- 6.3.6 Indigenous communities in conjunction with other stakeholders will identify community priorities for the development of child care and child and family programs.
- 6.3.7 The Board endorses the submission of funding proposals, to other levels of government, for the development of early learning and child care programs located in schools on a cost recovery basis. These applications will be co-developed with the CMSM in a manner that is consistent with related TDSB procedures and provincial policies. Not-for-profit organizations with Purchase of Service Agreements with Toronto Children's Services will be given priority in the development of licensed child care programs in order to achieve greater equity of access for families and to ensure compliance with the Ministry of Education's requirements.
- 6.3.8 School principals, child care supervisors, recreation providers and staff are expected to work together to ensure that shared space is available on an ongoing basis to provide consistent and seamless learning and care environments for all children.

- 6.3.9 Procedures and protocols will be developed to ensure that child care and other early years programs in exclusive and shared space meet mandatory standards and provide high quality programs, on a cost recovery basis.
- 6.3.10 Working together with different levels of government the Board and staff will establish fair and reasonable terms in Occupancy Agreements and continue to advocate for the security and stability of those agreements.
- 6.3.11 The Board and staff will strive to ensure effective integration of children enrolled in a co-located child care, into the local school, based on the principles of equity, transparency and seamlessness. In some circumstances, the Central Accommodation Team may determine that it is necessary to re-examine the lease agreement with the child care to address a lack of classroom space due to increasing student enrolment in the school.
- 6.3.12 Structures will be established to ensure regular and accessible communication with stakeholders to share information, address issues, and improve system planning and service delivery.
- 6.3.13 System effectiveness and accountability will be achieved through intentional and ongoing system monitoring and improvement. System improvements will be guided by research and evidence, community feedback and driven by innovative practices.

7.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

8.0 EVALUATION

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years after the effective date.

9.0 APPENDICES

N/A

10.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation

- *Child Care and Early Years Act*
- *Education Act*

Policies and Procedures

- Mission and Values Policy (P002)

Ministry of Education Documents

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (2014)
- The Ontario Early Years Child & Family Centres Guidelines (2015)
- The Kindergarten Program (2016)
- The Renewed Ontario Early Years Policy Framework (2017)
- Before- and After-School Programs – Kindergarten - Grade 6: Policies and Guidelines for School Boards (2017)
- Policy/Program Memoranda: B6 and B9 Child Care Capital Policies (2016-2017)
- The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (2017)
- Child Care and Schools – Working Together in a Shared Space (2017-18)