

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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| Section | PROGRAM | |
| Policy Name | EARLY YEARS | 604 |

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| March 12, 1999 | April 2004 | |

1.0 POLICY

Early years programs play an important role in supporting children’s learning, development, health, and well-being. 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), elementary education, and before-and-after-school programs.

2.0 RATIONALE

All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child- and family-centered and contribute to children’s learning, development, and well-being.

Ontario’s Vision for the Early Years

Superior-Greenstone 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. Children succeed in programs that focus on active learning through exploration, play, and inquiry. Children thrive in programs where they and their families are valued as active participants and contributors. 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.

Ontario’s education system integrates the transformation and modernization of child care and early years programs, making a truly connected system from birth to adulthood. Greater integration with early years, child care, and education services, will allow children to benefit from a seamless day and consistent quality of care that supports healthy child development, well-being and lifelong success.

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 such as, *The Kindergarten Document, 2016*, *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014*, and *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum, 2016*.

Education Act: Legislative Changes

Subsection 170 (1) of the Act has been amended to include the following paragraph:

- *Collaboration with municipalities*

- *Collaborate with municipalities to plan for the early and integrated development of school sites and the establishment of child care centers within schools to meet current and future needs of the board;*

Subsection 170 (1) of the Act has been amended to include the following paragraph:

- *Co-operation re: child care*
 - *Co-operation with service system managers, as required by the CCEYA, for the purposes of developing and implementing child care and early years programs and services plans.*

Through enhanced partnerships and greater integration with early years, child care, and education services, more children will benefit from a seamless day and consistent quality of care that supports healthy child development, well-being and lifelong success.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy:

“Before-and-after school programs” refer 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 Superior-Greenstone District School Board, which is also referred to as SGDSB.

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

“Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB)” are the service delivery agents for social assistance, childcare and affordable and social housing. The TBDSSAB is the designated and legislated CMSM for child care and early years responsibilities for the municipalities within Superior-Greenstone DSB.

“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 SGDSB 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 SGDSB from birth to 12 years of age.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Education holds the 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 Early Years Lead.

5.0 POLICY

5.1 Programs and Pedagogy

At Superior-Greenstone District School Board we believe:

- 5.1.1 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;
- 5.1.2 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-centered decision-making, programming and pedagogy;
- 5.1.3 Recognizing that children have diversity of early years experiences and abilities, educators will collaborate to meet their unique needs within their local school as much as possible;
- 5.1.4 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;
- 5.1.5 Children's language, culture, abilities, beliefs and experiences offer a rich opportunity to enhance their own, their peers, and their educator's learning;
- 5.1.6 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;
- 5.1.7 Learning environments will be thoughtfully co-created to engage children in a range of culturally reflective and responsive literacy and numeracy experiences; and
- 5.1.8 Principals and educators must identify how their own biases, power and privilege might influence their actions, interactions and pedagogical practices and must adjust their behavior accordingly.
- 5.1.9 The SGDSB 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.
- 5.1.10 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 human rights.
- 5.1.11 Families will be engaged as critical partners in their children's learning. Staff and parents and guardians will cultivate reciprocal relationships where all voices are heard and respected to address biases and remove barriers that impede children's learning and development.
- 5.1.12 Partners will be engaged with on a yearly basis to assess demand and viability for Before and After School Programs (BASP).

5.2 Relationships

At Superior-Greenstone District School Board we believe:

- 5.2.1 Families, communities, agencies, operators and all levels of government are important partners with school boards in the provision of early years programs including childcare in schools. System leaders, individual school principals and educators will maintain and enhance effective relationships with these partners in delivering early learning and childcare programs;
- 5.2.2 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;
- 5.2.3 Families and communities play a significant role in children's learning, health, development and well-being. It is recognized that child and family well-being are often inextricably linked;
- 5.2.4 Respectful and responsive relationships with Indigenous communities are critical to informing the expansion of early years programs serving Indigenous children and families. SGDSB commits to ensuring the active engagement of Indigenous partners in the planning and delivery of responsive programs and services;
- 5.2.5 Children's relationships with their peers play a significant role in their sense of belonging and well-being. Given that children need to feel connected in a positive way to their peers, educators play an important role in nurturing peer-to-peer connectedness and relationships.

5.3 Shared Spaces

At Superior-Greenstone District School Board we believe:

- 5.3.1 Schools will serve as community hubs to improve accessibility and continuity of programming and service subject to approval by the Plant Department.
- 5.3.2 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.
- 5.3.3 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.
- 5.3.4 Structures will be established to ensure regular and accessible communication with stakeholders to share information, address issues and improve system planning and service delivery.
- 5.3.5 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.
- 5.3.6 Strengthening partnerships with other early years and child care programs and services between programs (eg. EarlyON/Child Care/ Before and After School Program (BASP)/ other Community Partnerships) in schools, neighbourhoods and system-wide by using the Working Together in a Shared Space (2024) to guide school Principals in building and nurturing a shared culture in schools for all children, families and educators.

- 5.3.7 In the implementation of a responsive, high-quality early years program that reflects and responds to the social identities of the families being served.

6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation

- Child Care and Early Years Act
- Education Act
- PPM 11: Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs

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)
 - Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum (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)
 - Working Together in a Shared Space (2023-2024)
 - Ontario Early Years Leadership Guidance Document (2023)
 - Supporting All Children to Attend Kindergarten in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools (2023)
 - Principal Leadership in the Early Years (2023)
 - Bill 98, Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023