

# SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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Section	PROGRAM	
Policy Name	KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM <b>EARLY YEARS</b>	604
Board Approved:	Reviewed:	Review By:
October 27, 2015	October 5, 2015	<b>December 2024</b>
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## **1.0 POLICY**

As per the Education Act, Superior-Greenstone District School Board offers a full day early learning program for two years in every elementary school.

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, before-and-after-school programs

## **2.0 RATIONALE**

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. 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.

## **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 CSM 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.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **1.0 Early Learning Eligibility**

Any child may register when he/she has attained his/her fourth (4th) birthday by December 31 of that calendar year.

#### **2.0 Flexible Programming**

Participation in the Early Learning program is flexible. The Kindergarten Program is a two-year program that honours the uniqueness and individual needs of every child. Children develop at different rates and in different ways; as such, schools and families/caregivers work together to determine what is in the best interests of students who may be experiencing challenges transitioning into school.

#### **3.0 Goals of the Full Day Program**

- Developmentally appropriate programming to meet the varying experiences, backgrounds, abilities, and needs of all children
- Purposeful play as the main vehicle to promote all aspects of learning
- Creating healthy learning environments that are safe, secure, stimulating and thoughtfully planned with the child in mind
- Encouraging learning through exploring, playing, talking, risk-taking, problem solving and making choices
- Using a variety of instructional strategies with the whole class, small groups and individuals
- Providing integrated experiences that build a strong foundation for literacy and numeracy development
- Ongoing, authentic assessment practices to inform programming and improve learning
- Ensuring a smoother transition into Grade 1

- Welcoming parents and caregivers as valued partners in their children's education
- Fostering partnerships between home, school, early learning partners and the larger community

#### 4.0 Early Learning Partnerships

- Redefining "school" as hubs of learning for children beginning at birth.
- Create a comprehensive system to maximize the mutual sharing of facilities, equipment and resources.
- Schools and early learning centers will work collaboratively to facilitate the transition of students into early learning programs.

#### 5.0 Educator Teams

An educator team, comprised of a designated early childhood educator and a teacher, is required for Kindergarten classrooms where there are 16 or more Year One and Year Two Kindergarten students.

### 5.0 POLICY

#### 5.1 Programs and Pedagogy

At SGDSB 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 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

At SGDSB we believe:

- 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 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;
- 6.2.4 Respectful and responsive relationships with Indigenous communities are critical cutting-edge 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;
- 6.2.5 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 ways to their peers, educators play an important role in nurturing peer-to-peer connectedness and relationships.

## 6.3 Shared Spaces

At SGDSB we believe:

- 6.3.1 Schools will serve as community hubs to improve accessibility and continuity of programming and service subject to approval by the Plant Department.
- 6.3.2 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.
- 6.3.3 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.

6.3.4 Structures will be established to ensure regular and accessible communication with stakeholders to share information, address issues and improve system planning and service delivery.

6.3.5 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.

## **7.0 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)
  - 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)