Toronto District School Board

Policy P022

Title: **Early Learning & Care Policy**

Adopted: October 28, 1998

Effected: October 28, 1998

Revised: N/A

Reviewed: N/A

Authorization: Board of Trustees

1. 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 their community.

The Board recognizes its important leadership role in the provision 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.

1. 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 programs for children from birth to age 12 including but not limited to child care in schools, child and family programs, Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) and elementary education.

1. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy:

*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 through twelve (12) years of age including before-and after-school programming.

*Early Years* refers to children from birth to age eight (8).

*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, child and family program supervisors, before-and after-school programs, school-board staff).

1. 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.

1. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

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

1. POLICY
   1. **Programs and Pedagogy:** 
      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.
      2. 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.
      3. 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.
      4. 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. Children’s language, culture, abilities, beliefs, and experiences offer a rich opportunity to enhance their own and their peers, and educator’s learning.
      6. Learning environments will be thoughtfully co-created to engage children in a range of culturally reflective and responsive literacy and numeracy experiences.
      7. Educators must identify how their own biases, power and privilege influence their interactions and pedagogical practices.
      8. 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 and pedagogy will integrate Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing.
      9. 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.
      10. Parents 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.
   2. **Relationships**:
      1. Families, communities, agencies and all levels of government are important partners with school boards in the provision of early years programs including child care in schools. The Board will maintain and enhance effective relationships with these partners in delivering early learning and child care programs.

* + 1. 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.
    2. 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.
    3. 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.
    4. 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.
    5. School-based educators will consult and collaborate with families and other professionals to facilitate the inclusion of children with special needs.
    6. Positive relationships between school, child care and other early years partners support continuity and consistency for children and their families across programs, including when entering school, and transitioning from grade to grade, or between programs and schools.
    7. 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.
    8. 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.
    9. Educators, school and system leaders will have opportunities to engage in critical reflection and inquiry and collaborative professional learning related to quality in early years programs.
  1. **Strategic System Planning (Access, Stability, Continuity):** 
     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.
     2. Attention will be given to the most marginalized communities with a goal of improving access, equity and service excellence to all families.
     3. Schools will serve as community hubs to improve accessibility and continuity of programming and service subject to approval by the Planning Department.
     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.
     5. Indigenous communities in conjunction with other stakeholders will identify community priorities for the development of child care and child and family programs.
     6. Not-for-profit organizations with Purchase of Service Agreements with Toronto Children’s Services will be given priority in the development of new child care programs in order to achieve equity of access for families. The Board endorses submissions to develop not-for-profit early learning and child care programs, co-located in all schools, on a cost-recovery basis. Applications for new child care centres will be co-developed in a manner that is consistent with the related board procedures and ministry policies.
     7. Procedures and protocols will be developed to ensure that child care and other early years programs in exclusive and shared space meet the standards required for licensing, on a cost recovery basis.
     8. 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.
     9. Access to high quality, affordable child care is often a pre-requisite for pursuing education and employment for families with young children. As such, admission will be prioritized for pre-school children who attend onsite school-based child care as outlined in the Board’s admission procedures. Alignment between board and child care admission policies is expected where there are student accommodation pressures identified by the Planning Department.
     10. Structures will be established to ensure regular and accessible, communication with stakeholders to share information, address issues, and improve service delivery.
     11. 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.

1. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

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

1. EVALUATION

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

1. APPENDICES

N/A

1. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation

* *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*
* *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 Full-Day 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)