

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

2025-2026

Handbook



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1) WELCOME TO EARLY EDUCATION

What an adventure awaits your little one as they head off to school: new friends, new experiences and new ways of having fun! While enjoying the time in the early education program your child will also be developing important skills that will prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Children will develop foundational skills for reading, writing, math, science, and more, as well as how to interact successfully with teachers and classmates.

The first five years of a child's life is a critical time of brain development where important brain connections occur and learning connections can be strengthened due to the plasticity or flexibility within the developing young brain. What happens in the first five years of life will impact them for the rest of their life in terms of learning, mental health and physical health outcomes. Please visit this website to learn more: <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-of-brain-development>

The philosophy of our program is founded on a child's need to feel valued and accepted. Within our Early Education Programs, developing a positive self-image and satisfying the natural curiosity of children is fostered through the use of a variety of materials and activities. Suitable play materials will be presented in fun and creative activity centres supported by knowledgeable staff who can extend the child's experience and learning.

Children will be encouraged to use their imagination, develop initiative and independence, function both as a group member and an individual, and learn to share and cooperate with others. We will foster positive relations and respect for one another. Communication skills and socialization are keys to a successful future for your child. Opportunities to develop motor skills, both small muscles and big muscles, are a component of daily programming.

Children will be encouraged to develop their listening skills (through activities such as songs, stories, etc.) and to follow simple directions. We will provide opportunities (e.g., art, dress- up centres) which will enhance the creativity of all children. Our early education programs provide an inclusive environment, meeting the needs of all children regardless of where they are at in development, by providing child to adult ratios that encourage interaction among children and adults in a safe and relaxed manner.

The program focuses on language enrichment and speech development in all activities. Early education opportunities provide for the physical, social, intellectual, creative, and emotional development of all children in the program.



2) GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Experiences during early childhood years are crucial to a child's learning and development.
- A safe and caring environment is necessary for learning.
- Children learn through play and exploration.
- Staff and families work as partners to support a child's development.
- A team approach is used to address all areas of a child's development.
- Active involvement in meaningful learning experiences include challenges and successes.
- Meeting all children and families, where they are currently at, is critical.
- Decision making and responsibilities are shared.
- Children learn and reflect what they know in different ways.
- Children's needs are identified early, and proactive steps are taken to address potential delays or challenges.
- Our early education programs are ready to accommodate all children and adapt programs to ensure learning and success for all.



3) STAFF

Early Learning Educator

Our Early Education Program Team is comprised of a certified Early Learning Educator who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the early education program. The Early Learning Educator plans and implements age-appropriate play-based programming for all children in the classroom. They communicate with families in person, by email, apps or newsletters. The Early Learning Educator will be your child's teacher.

The Early Learning Educator works collaboratively with a team of educational assistants and other professionals in programming for children with identified needs, meeting Alberta Education criteria for supports in programming.

Early Learning Educational Assistants

A team of well-trained early education educational assistants are also part of the day-to-day team in the classroom.

Learning Support Teacher

A Learning Support Teacher (LST) is responsible for setting the programming for children with identified delays. Their role includes the development, implementation and monitoring of Individualized Early Learning Plans (IELPs). They also work with the Early Learning Educator in mentoring the educational assistants in meeting the needs of children.

Speech Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist

Lethbridge School Division has six Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) on staff who work to develop effective speech and language goals and activities to help children work towards appropriate developmental milestones. One of these SLPs will be assigned to your child's school for ongoing support to children with identified needs. We also have one Occupational Therapist (OT) that can support children's needs with fine motor skills, sensory needs and daily living skills.

Other Professionals

At times, we also work with team members from outside agencies who may be supporting children with identified needs in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, mental health or behavioural needs.



4) EEP CALENDAR

**2025/2026 will be added when confirmed.*

5) SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

MORNING PROGRAM SCHEDULE

8:30 –9:00 Welcome children and outdoor play

9:00-9:15 Go inside, get ready for the day

9:15-9:30 Circle Time

9:30-10:00 Centre time

10:00-10:30 Music/Movement

10:30-10:40 Bathroom Break

10:40-10:55 Snack

10:55-11:10 Songs/Stories/Puzzles

11:10-11:15 Get ready for home

11:15 Dismissal

AFTERNOON PROGRAM SCHEDULE

12:30 –1:00 Welcome children and outdoor play

1:00-1:15 Go inside, get ready for the day

1:15-1:30 Circle Time

1:30-2:00 Centre time

2:00-2:30 Music/Movement

2:30-2:40 Bathroom Break

2:40-2:55 Snack

2:55-3:10 Songs/Stories/Puzzles

3:10-3:15 Get ready for home

3:15 Dismissal



6) REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Children must be 4 years old by December 31st of the school year they are entering. Children must be toilet trained (this means not in diapers or pull ups). Children with severe developmental delays that meet Alberta Education support criteria are the exception to this or if an exceptional medical circumstance exists whereby your child is not able to be toilet trained (please indicate when registering). Children who turn 3 by December 31st may enter the early education program if they have an assessed moderate language delay or severe developmental delay that meets the Alberta Education criteria to access early intervention. *Note: Additional 3-year-old spaces may open if space allows.*

Qualifications for entry as a child with identified educational needs, that may require additional support, should be verified with Carlie Ramotowski, Lethbridge School Division's Early Learning Coordinator at 403-380-5291 or via email carlie.ramotowski@lethsd.ab.ca This may include children experiencing speech and language delays, motor challenges, behaviour challenges, medical conditions that affect learning, etc. Please contact Carlie for further information.

FEES:

Fees are required for early education programming as Alberta Education only provides funding for children with an identified delay meeting specific criterion. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is required at the time of registration. Children accessing 4 half days of programming per week pay \$200/month. Monthly fees can only be paid via the School Cash Online system. Non-payment of monthly fees may result in your child being asked to exit the program.

Some fees may be covered for children meeting education funding criteria. These would include children with identified delays (assessment documentation must be provided that meets Alberta Education eligibility criteria) or children just learning English (assessment process is required), providing they meet educational age requirements.

The registration process is considered complete when we have received:

- your non-refundable \$40 deposit (paid in cash or School Cash Online)
- completed registration forms
- copy of birth certificate

7) GENERAL POLICIES

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

1. Please arrive no sooner than 5 minutes before the program begins.
2. Children should be taken to the bathroom before they come to school.
3. Parents (or adult caregiver) are required to bring their child to the early education meeting point to confirm their child's arrival with staff so that the time and person dropping the child off can be recorded. At the end of programming staff will record the time and person picking the child up.
4. Children must be picked up on time. Repeated late pick-ups may result in your child being asked to leave the program. Staff work times and break time need to be respected.
5. If someone other than you will be picking your child up, you must notify the school in advance. Photo ID may be required from the person picking your child up.
6. Parents are responsible for the supervision of younger siblings at all times.

ILLNESS AND ABSENCES

1. If your child will be absent, please use the Safe Arrival Reporting System:
 - a. Using your mobile device, download and install the SchoolMessenger app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store (or from the links at <https://go.schoolmessenger.com>). The first time you use the app, select Sign Up to create your account. Then, select Attendance to Report an Absence.
 - b. Use the SafeArrival website, <https://go.schoolmessenger.com>. The first time you use the website, select Sign Up to create your account. Then, select Attendance to Report an Absence.
 - c. Call the toll-free number 866-879-1041 to report an absence using the automated phone system.
2. If your child has symptoms of illness (i.e. fever, diarrhea, vomiting, excessive coughing or runny nose), please keep your child at home.
3. If your child is ill, we will contact you to pick him/her up immediately.
4. Staff will not administer medication. (Except in the case of a life-threatening allergy.)
5. In the event of a medical emergency, an ambulance will be called, and the parents notified.
6. Please report any communicable diseases to the school as soon as you are aware. (Example measles, mumps, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.)

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Please refer to the school handbook for procedures relating to fire drills, lockdowns, etc.

SETTING LIMITS

We employ strategies that are proactive so that desirable behaviour occurs. Positive praise is integral to our program. Providing positive descriptive praise goes a long way to setting the expectations for others.

Incidents of inappropriate behavior will occur at times. In these cases, a calm voice is used to gain the child's attention, using their name. An adult may guide the child away from the situation and the child will be reminded of our class rules and limits. Every effort will be made to assist the child in understanding his or her actions and making positive choices. The child will then be redirected to another activity or to practice a skill or positive interaction.

Problem-solving skills are learned along the way. Choices, as well as natural or logical consequences, will be explained to clarify a given situation. A specific toy may need to be removed or a child may at times benefit from a quiet time away from the busy activities. The child's dignity and self-respect will be maintained at all times.

WASHROOM USE

It is recommended that you have your child visit the washroom prior to leaving your home. This would include washing hands to reduce allergy risks and germs.

Children should tell the teacher when they need to use the washroom.

Programs will have a washroom break—where children use the toilet and wash their hands.

An adult always accompanies children to the washroom.

Children need to be independent in using the washroom (able to pull down pants, wipe their bottom, etc.) unless they have an identified delay.

SNACK

Please alert the school office and your child's Early Learning Educator to any food allergies your child may have. Foods which are prohibited in the classroom include nuts and seeds, hard candies, caramels/toffee, chewing gum and gumdrops. Water is often the best beverage for young children.

[Healthy Eating for Parents and Children resource](#)

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters will be sent home regularly informing you of upcoming events. A month-by-month calendar will be included to remind you of special events. Your Early Learning Educator also connects with parents through apps or email to provide updates, share important reminders and sometimes share documentation of your child learning in the classroom.

CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES

Please label coats, boots, shoes, hats, mittens and back packs on inside labels of items.

Inside shoes are necessary in case of a fire drill, especially when it is rainy or snowy.

Dress the children according to the weather as we go outside for activities almost every day if there is not a weather warning (e.g., frostbite). We do go out in the rain, in the snow and the wind, so please send your child prepared.

Clothing that is easy to pull up and down makes toileting easier for your child.

Your child will bring their own healthy snack each day.

Teach your child how to open various snack containers and packages so there will be minimal, if any, assistance required by an adult.

Clothing should be washable as we engage in creative activities involving paint, glue, etc. and it may get messy. Keeping a change of clothes in your child's backpack is always a good idea.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We will follow school division guidelines regarding visitors/volunteers to the school.

Parents have very special skills which they may like to share with the class. Please let your child's teacher know if you are willing to talk to the class about your job, a special interest or any other relevant topic. We may be able to arrange to have you video a short presentation to share in class with the children.

TIP FOR PARENTS

If this is your first early education experience, you may have questions regarding what will happen. Please feel free to ask questions as they arise. As this may be your child's first experience away from you for any significant time, please determine a plan of action with the Early Learning Educator if your child may have difficulty separating from you. Rest assured that the teacher will inform you of any prolonged upset on the part of your child after you have dropped off your child.

To provide the best opportunity for success, it is critical that young children have sufficient rest to learn and function best. Children ages 3 – 5 years old should be getting 10 – 12 hours of sleep per night. Another advantage you can provide for your child is good nutrition as developing brains and bodies require good nutrients in order to develop well. Please consult the Canadian Food Guide for more information - <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

One of the best activities you can do with your child to build strong brains is to talk with them many times through the day. Give them your full attention and have back and forth conversations. This builds strong brain connections, buffers stress in young children and provides so much learning! Play with your children and look at books together to further strengthen their development.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR YOUR CHILD

Extra supports may be given in the area of speech and language to those children who attend having identified speech or language needs. Our Early Education Program classrooms provide rich language environments through which children build communication skills and socialization. Some children will receive additional speech and language supports throughout the programming day which is supervised by one of our Speech Language Pathologists.

OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

These services are provided when necessary and are delivered by our Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist that make onsite visits for specific children as well as offering ideas and consultation to the early education team.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIOURAL SERVICES

A school division psychologist is available for consultation to the Early Education Programs as needed for children that may be experiencing significant social/emotional/behavioural needs that impact their ability to participate in the classroom. There is a referral process and written parent consent is required when consultation is for a specific child.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Should the need arise to withdraw your child from the program during the year the following fee process applies:

If 30-day notice is given regarding the withdrawal date, and the child leaves part-way through a month, they would receive a pro-rated reimbursement for the portion of the month not attended.

Should a child exit the program without a 30-day notice, part way through a month, there will be no refund for the remainder of the days within the month of exit.

NON-PAYMENT OF FEES

NON-PAYMENT OF FEES MAY RESULT IN YOUR CHILD BEING ASKED TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM. WE OPERATE UNDER THE SCHOOL ACT, AND AS SUCH, ARE A NON-SUBSIDIZED PROGRAM AND WE ARE RELIANT UPON FEE PAYMENT TO REMAIN IN OPERATION.

We look forward to meeting you and your family and welcoming your child into the exciting world of early education!

