

Prekindergarten: Guidelines and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Prekindergarten (PK) Programs

- Prekindergarten is an early intervention, prevention program.
- Prekindergarten is a targeted program for our most vulnerable or at risk 3 and 4 year old children and families.
- Programs have been placed in schools where children living in the attendance area will benefit most significantly.
- Prekindergarten is not a universal program for all 3 and 4 year olds. Space is limited.
- Prekindergarten is play-based. Children who have the opportunity to socialize with same age peers in other settings, including child/day care, preschool, play groups, etc already benefit and typically don't need to attend prekindergarten. The space should be for a child from a needy, less fortunate family.
- The Ministry suggests a ratio of 8 children to 1 adult. When space permits and/or attendance is irregular, SRPSD recommends a maximum of 10 children to 1 adult.
- See PK brochure (*SRPSDs Homepage > Parent Information > PK Registration*)

Prekindergarten Selection Process

- Research shows that vulnerable children benefit greatly from attending prekindergarten for two years. When selecting students, 3 year olds receive the same consideration as 4 year olds.
- See SRPSDs Administrative Procedure 300, Admission of Resident Students. Note in AP 300 (#7) that children need to be 3 before starting prekindergarten.
- The PK Application Form (*see SRPSDs Homepage > Parent Information*) and the PK Selection Processes (*see SRPSDs Homepage > Teacher Information > Integrated Learning Department > Prekindergarten > Family Engagement*) guide the selection process. Based on the information and knowledge of the family, a team of 2 or 3 school-based educators (teacher and administrator along with SLP or EST) review the application forms and select children to attend. Home visits serve to aid selection process.
- The prekindergarten selection process is finalized in fall so that late applicants and vulnerable families new to a community have opportunity to apply.
 - By September 15th, children are selected with the exception of 2 or 3 spots.
 - By October 15th, prekindergarten programs are full. When classroom space allows, or irregular attendance is anticipated, 20 children may be registered.
- Children do not need to be independent with toileting to attend prekindergarten. Toileting is included in the EA's role description.
- Because families are transient, prekindergarten is a continuous entry program. Therefore, a waiting list of 3 and 4 year olds is needed at each school. Waiting lists also help determine the need for additional prekindergarten programs.

Prekindergarten Timeframes

- Prekindergarten is a 10 month, 12 to 15 hour a week program. Start and end dates for prekindergarten coincide with the regular school calendar.
- Home visits at the beginning of the year are part of the program. With travel time, home visits may take up to 1 hour. Based on this, teachers and EAs can make at least

5 home visits a day. A program starting with 15 children (for example) may require 3 days of home visits. Teachers with more children (2 classes) will require more time; teachers with fewer children will require less time.

- For 2015-2016, home visits may be scheduled to begin on September 1st. Following completion of the majority of home visits, prekindergarten begins. Schools will have different start dates depending on the number of home visits.
- Some teachers prefer to have a staggered entry with half of the children beginning on the first day, half the second day, and all of the children on the third day.
- The required time for prekindergarten is 12 to 15 hours a week which includes family engagement time.
- **Prekindergarten has the same June end date as all elementary classrooms.**

Fridays

- Prekindergarten children attend on Fridays when family events are planned.
- Fridays provide teachers with prep time and time for family events or PD. Rather than weekly, this time may be calculated and averaged throughout the year.
- Typically, prekindergarten teachers and EAs work together on Fridays assessing and organizing documentation of students' work, reflecting on documentation and subsequent planning, participating in home visits or family events, creating learning centres & invitations for learning, enhancing learning environment, or attending PD.

Quality Prekindergarten Programming

- Prekindergarten is holistic and focuses on the physical, social/emotional, intellectual, and spiritual domains. Children need to socialize and play, to be creative and become problem solvers, to be immersed in language and literacy, and to curiously interact with nature.
- **Essential Learning Experiences (ELEs)** have been identified by the Ministry of Education in four domains: Intellectual, Social-Emotional Learning, Physical, and Spiritual. ELEs serve to assist early childhood educators in planning for, monitoring, facilitating, scaffolding, and documenting the child development in prekindergarten.
- Daily, three and four year olds need opportunity to run, dance, balance, climb, etc to develop their gross motor skills. Scheduled gym time is important.
- Weather permitting, prekindergarten children need to play outside daily. To maximize play time and minimize dressing time, time outdoors may best be scheduled at the beginning or end of the day.
- See prekindergarten documents Better Beginnings, Better Futures as well as Play and Exploration. Both teacher and administrator handbooks are in your schools or can be downloaded through the Ministry's website. New teachers receive documents.
- See Ministry website (www.education.gov.sk.ca/ELCC) for available resources, guides, supports, information, and professional learning opportunities.
- **Early Years Evaluation (EYE)** implementation dates: Nov. 2/15 to Nov. 27/15
- **Help Me Tell My Story (HMTMS)** implementation: Sept. 21/15 to Oct. 8/15
- For links and supports to ELEs, "I Can" statements, resources, family engagement, and EYE, see SRPSDs Home Page >Teacher Information > Integrated Learning Department > PK.

Family Engagement

- Engaging families in prekindergarten in positive ways is critical for learning success. A warm and welcoming space that draws parents into the classroom often includes a sitting area, books, culturally-diverse elements, documentation of children's work, and pictures of children and their families (at the children's eye level).
- Prekindergarten programs engage families through events that include home visits, family days or evenings, and family education events (literacy, nutrition, immunization, etc). Prekindergarten teachers are expected to organize these family engagement events as part of the program.
- Three home visits per year for each child are recommended.
- Typically, family days/events occur monthly. Evening events, including gym nights and family literacy events, are gaining popularity.
- Family learning opportunities (e.g.; PA Literacy Network, School Nutritionist, Public Health Nurse, etc) may be scheduled throughout the year.
- Parent/teacher/child interviews are required and may be held during home visits.
- See *Family Engagement in Prekindergarten (2012)* for Philosophical Background, Expectations, and Key Practices (e.g.; Communication, Respectful Partnership, Home Visits, Goal Setting, and Child Development) that make a difference!

Nutrition

- Prekindergarten programs provide a nutritious snack daily which provides another opportunity for communication and socialization. Teachers or EAs typically do the nutrition shopping on Friday.

Documentation of Students' Learning

- Documentation of student learning and portfolio assessment are the required methods of assessing the learning of prekindergarten children. Rather than a report card, documentation shows children actively engaged in the processes of learning, captures milestones, and supports reflection in determining next teaching/learning plans. Portfolio assessment is purposeful, guided by the **Essential Learning Experiences (ELEs) and "I Can" Statements**, and shows what children can do over the course of the year.
- The Ministry's Phase II Workshop: How Young Children Learn/ Using Documentation supports the documentation process.
- Teachers require quality classroom cameras/iPads for the documentation process.
- Cumulative folders are required for prekindergarten children.

Professional Learning for Prekindergarten Teachers and EAs

- **SRPSD workshops will be held on October 16/15, February 5/16, and April 29 /16.** All prekindergarten teachers and EAs are expected to attend and register online through the Professional Development link on SRPSDs Staff Room page beginning in early September.
- Additional professional learning opportunities will be posted on the Ministry's website www.education.gov.sk.ca/ELCC throughout the year.