

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

PROGRAM

EARLY YEARS

604

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

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”

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