

# Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning (Kindergarten to Grade 3)

## Introduction

Guiding Principles

Key Learning Skills

Curriculum Integration



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Early childhood is a significant period in human development. Independence, initiative, decision making, creativity, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood. What young children learn at this stage will have a major impact on their successful learning experiences in school, on their personal development and on their future participation in society.

The term primary programs describes the Kindergarten to Grade 3 years in elementary school; it is not a separate or additional curriculum. During this phase of schooling, children experience rapid growth and development. They arrive in school from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of experiences and make the significant transition from the home to the school environment. During this period, the task of formalizing students' learning experiences begins as the foundation is laid for later learning. Students' early experiences in school help form their identities as learners.

A key purpose of the primary grades is to help students develop a solid base of literacy, numeracy and social skills that will provide a foundation for later success. The outcomes in the provincial programs of study are intended to engage students in rich learning experiences in which they develop understandings that both relate to and make connections across specific subject areas.

Primary grade teachers are most often teaching all subject areas and, frequently, classes of combined age/grade levels. To create a dynamic interaction between students and the program of studies, teachers continually make choices. These include decisions about instructional practices, learning and assessment activities, learning materials and resources, and the organization of learning spaces that are based on the diversity that exists in every classroom. This is a complex task that requires a thorough understanding of who young children are and how and what they learn.

Alberta Education has therefore developed a framework for teaching and learning in the primary programs. This framework will help teachers make informed choices that meet the diverse needs of K–3 students and help them experience success in the provincial curriculum and in their lives. The components of this framework are:

### ◆ **Guiding Principles**

The guiding principles provide the philosophical and theoretical foundation for learning in the primary years. These principles will assist teachers in planning for instruction that is consistent with ideas about early childhood education that are derived from contemporary literature.

### ◆ **Key Learning Skills**

Key learning skills are those skills that are transferable across subject areas and grade levels and that are essential for students to become effective learners in school and in their personal lives. These skills are present in all subject areas in Kindergarten through Grade 3. Instruction is more efficient and effective when teachers help students learn and apply these skills in many contexts.

### ◆ **Curriculum Integration**

Children in the primary grades see learning in a holistic way and not as separate subject areas. Organizing for instruction, using integrative approaches, therefore helps students make connections across subject areas. In planning for instruction, teachers purposefully draw together outcomes across the curriculum to develop a more powerful understanding of key ideas.

Together, the guiding principles, key learning skills and curriculum integration provide a framework for teachers to use to plan for the complexity, diversity and interconnectedness of learning in the primary grades.