

Community-based programming in early childhood settings

Guidelines for school authorities

School authorities provide educational programs, including specialized supports, to young children who:

- have been diagnosed with disabilities/delays;
- are identified as gifted and talented; or
- are learning English as a Second Language (ESL).

Programming may be provided in community-based early childhood settings such as preschools or daycare.

In addition to the base instructional grant, school authorities can access Program Unit Funding (PUF), mild/moderate, gifted and talented and ESL funding to assist with the education of young children in Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs.

When children are enrolled in community-based programs and are receiving education programming supports and services through funding from Alberta Education, school authorities are accountable for the following:

1. Maintaining records that meet the requirements of the [Student Record Regulation](#).
2. Documentation that provides evidence of eligibility for PUF, mild/moderate/severe developmental disability or delay, gifted and talented or ESL funding.

3. Developing an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) for each child with a diagnosed mild/moderate/severe developmental disability or delay, identified as gifted and talented or learning English as a Second Language (see the [Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education](#) for more information on the requirements of an IPP).
4. Developing an educational service agreement* that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - access to a minimum of 475 hours of ECS instruction must be provided for each child during a school year (see the [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#), Section 1.1);
 - instructional time includes time scheduled for the purposes of instruction and other activities for children where direct child-teacher interaction and supervision are maintained;
 - dollar amount for any exchange of money that will be part of the agreement;
 - expectations/responsibilities of the school authority;
 - expectations/responsibilities of the community-based program;
 - program start and end dates; and
 - program days and time.

When this agreement is made between two school authorities, (e.g., a school jurisdiction and an approved private ECS operator) it should include a clear description of which authority will register the child with Alberta Education and; therefore, receive all applicable funding.

* It is recommended that school authorities and ECS operators seek their own legal advice in the development of their educational services agreement.

5. Employing Alberta certificated teachers and ensuring they are aware of and have the support needed to:

- take responsibility for ensuring that learning activities for students are directed toward achieving the outcomes of the Kindergarten Program Statement and IPPs, through:
 - face-to-face interaction with children for the purpose of teaching and assessing children’s achievement of outcomes; and/or
 - interaction with children who are engaged in classroom learning in a Kindergarten, preschool, playschool, daycare or child-care setting and/or family-oriented programming sessions (see Definition of Instruction: Early Childhood Services in the [Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12](#));
- address the goals and objectives identified in IPPs through each child’s educational programming;
- design the learning environment to ensure each child’s safety and promote active engagement, learning and participation;
- individualize and adapt practices for each child based on ongoing evaluation;
- review the goals and objectives in IPPs;

- incorporate specific instructions in the goals and objectives identified in IPPs across environments, activities and routines;
- use instructional procedures compatible with each child’s needs and the ECS setting to address the goals and objectives in IPPs;
- provide paraprofessionals (e.g., educational assistants) with direction regarding roles, responsibilities and skills for implementing programming;
- where applicable, include educational assistants, health professionals and other service providers as members of children’s learning teams;
- consider including community-based program staff on the learning team and in professional development activities; and
- ensure educational assistants have adequate supervision from a certificated teacher (see [Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education](#)).

To ensure the above requirements are met, school authorities must:

- provide supports, as appropriate, to meet individual needs of each child;
- facilitate opportunities for family-oriented decision making; and
- ensure the teacher-child ratio allows time for the certificated teacher to:
 - communicate clearly and regularly with the community-based program staff to monitor programming on a regular and ongoing basis;
 - provide pedagogical support;
 - provide leadership to the multidisciplinary planning process;

- develop, monitor and evaluate IPPs for each child with special education needs;
- communicate with parents about the educational program and the IPP;
- regularly observe:
 - o each child;
 - o interaction between child and peers; and
 - o interaction between child and program staff;
- engage in direct teaching and assessment with each child;
- coach and provide strategies to educational assistants and other community-based program staff;
- conduct family-oriented programming sessions (where applicable); and
- ensure Alberta Education is aware that the operator is providing community-based programming.

Health and Safety Standards

A community-based ECS program must be operated in a facility that complies with all applicable municipal and provincial public health, safety, fire and building standards, including being a program that is licensed under the [*Child Care Licensing Act*](#).

School authorities offering ECS programs are responsible for being familiar with and complying with all applicable requirements of the [*School Act*](#), [*Funding Manual for School Authorities*](#), [*Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*](#), [*Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education*](#), [*Kindergarten Program Statement*](#) and all applicable regulations.