

Early Learning

In Alberta Accredited International Schools

Key references and information to support educators in Alberta Accredited International Schools to provide quality programming in the early years.

Education in Canada

In Canada, education is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) comprises ministers of education from across Canada who provide leadership in education and consult on a variety of issues.

CMEC uses the [Learn Canada 2020](#) framework to enhance lifelong learning for all Canadians. The framework is centred on four pillars:

1. early childhood learning and development;
2. elementary and secondary schooling;
3. post-secondary education; and
4. adult learning and skills development.



Children imagine, express and communicate ideas and feelings at Canadian School, Guadalajara

In 2012, CMEC released the [Statement on Play-Based Learning](#), which underscores the benefits of early learning. Research and early childhood experts support purposeful play-based learning. Play-based learning sets the stage for future learning, health and well-being.

The framework and the *Statement on Play-Based Learning* are available on the CMEC website, www.cmec.ca, under Research & Publications.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) *Statement on Play-Based Learning*

Learning through play is supported by children. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Play is responsive to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on his or her innate curiosity and creativity. Play-based learning supports growth in the language and culture of children and their families.

Education in Alberta

Alberta has a strong Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 12 education system comprising public, separate, charter, Francophone, private schools and private ECS operators. The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that all children and students are provided with an education that enriches their lives, prepares them for flexible careers in a diversified global economy, and provides them with the skills and tools they need to be successful, engaged and contributing members of the community.

In an increasingly global and interconnected world, international education helps students build a global outlook and acquire international and inter-cultural knowledge, skills and awareness.

More information is available on the Alberta Education website at: education.alberta.ca/programs-of-study.



Experimenting and exploring with different materials provides opportunities for children to ask questions, hypothesize, draw conclusions, play, “get messy,” problem solve and discuss observations.

Photo credit: Canadian School, Guadalajara

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 during this time will have a significant impact on successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and on future participation in society.

Kindergarten

Alberta Education provides access to 475 hours of Kindergarten in the year prior to Grade 1. The ministry’s [Kindergarten Program Statement](#) outlines learner expectations that are appropriate for young children and are part of a learning pathway.

The [Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning \(Kindergarten to Grade 3\)](#) outlines ten principles that guide Kindergarten to Grade 3 programs, and are based on current understandings and research on young children, families, communities and schools (education.alberta.ca/media/563580/guidingprinc2007.pdf).

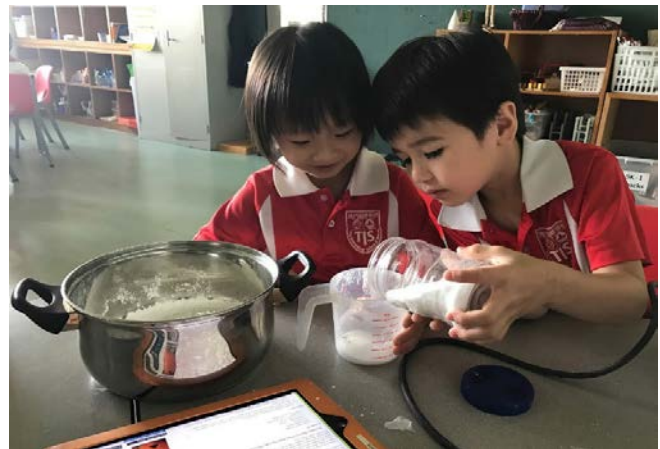
The guiding principles help teachers reflect on the nature of young children and their learning to make informed instructional decisions and to create learning environments that are responsive to children’s diverse needs.

The principles set the context for programming by fostering opportunities for children to develop and accomplish new understandings. Kindergarten strengthens a foundation for forming ideas, developing language, solving problems and expressing thoughts and feelings. The guiding principles are described in the [Kindergarten Program Statement](#), which is available on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca/media/563583/kindprogstate2008.pdf.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 Guiding Principles

1. Childhoods differ depending on social and cultural circumstances.
2. Children's development is influenced but not determined by their early experiences.
3. Children interact and learn in a variety of contexts.
4. Children are co-constructors of knowledge and partners in learning.
5. Children are unique and active contributors to their learning.
6. Children construct and represent knowledge in a variety of ways.
7. Children are citizens and active participants in school and society.
8. Children are active collaborators in and users of assessment.
9. Children may require specialized programming and supports to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.
10. Children and their families may need co-ordinated community services to meet their needs.

KINDERGARTEN LEARNING AREAS



Children at the International School of Macao collaborate during a cooking activity, developing their reading, fine motor, social, cooking and math skills in addition to learning about nutrition.

Kindergarten Learner Expectations

The [Kindergarten Program Statement](#) outlines the seven learning areas that interrelate to meet the social, physical, intellectual, cultural, creative and emotional needs of young children. The learning areas provide a transition to the subject area expectations of elementary schools.

Child development involves a broad array of programming outcomes. Children are diverse learners and active contributors within a variety of cultural and social contexts. Experiences within families and communities define the various pathways that children learn, in and outside the school. In response to these differences, schools can build on children's prior knowledge and experience.

Young children learn in a holistic way, and many of the learnings identified in the program statement may be accomplished simultaneously.

It is intended that the learner expectations will be integrated through learning activities that are developmentally appropriate for young children. Some children are already developing or have developed some of the learnings described in the program statement. Most children will achieve these learnings before they enter Grade 1. Others will continue to develop them during the primary school years. The *Kindergarten Program Statement* learner expectations should be adapted and modified to support each child's growth and development. Kindergarten supports children's preparation for entry into Grade 1 and provides a foundation for later success.

Pre-Kindergarten

In Alberta, ECS is provided in a variety of settings. To support quality programming, [Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework](#) (Flight Framework) has been developed by MacEwan University in partnership with the Government of Alberta.

The Flight Framework guiding principles align with the Kindergarten to Grade 3 guiding principles. Programming is developed based on holistic play-based goals for children's responsive care, play, learning and development:

1. well-being;
2. play and playfulness;
3. communications and literacies; and
4. diversity and social responsibility.

Early learning and care frameworks such as the Flight Framework are different than traditional curriculum in that they:

- embrace children's everyday experiences as sources of learning; and
- are tools that early childhood educators use to describe, reflect on and make meaning of what children are already doing, and to imagine possibilities for what might happen next.

Early learning is a participatory process of inquiry and reflection involving the child, staff, family and other caregivers.

In the Flight Framework, every child is considered a "mighty learner." This view of the child was adopted to exemplify the learning potential of each and every child from birth.

Children's play is central to early learning as an active, exploratory, creative and expressive process. The Flight Framework is deeply embedded in children's everyday experiences, and how they learn about and actively make sense of the world. Early childhood educators view children's play as a means to understand what children know and can do, and to expand and extend the children's learning.



Sand and water play provide opportunities for children to develop language, explore materials, and accomplish new learnings. Social interaction and co-operation with others are part of Kindergarten programming.

Photo credit: Canadian International School of Phnom Penh