

# Alberta

## Early Childhood Services

### 3. Early Childhood Programming



**Early Childhood Services (ECS)** refers to the broad, coordinated system of local and provincial programs that meet the developmental and special education needs of young children and their families. Please see [Programming for Children with Special Education Needs](#) for more information. **Kindergarten** refers specifically to the education program for children in the year prior to Grade 1. The Kindergarten program is an important part of ECS.

In ECS programs, young children participate as active learners, build a shared set of experiences and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for subsequent learning.

#### Prior to Kindergarten

During this period, learning occurs primarily in the home environment and extends into the community. Parents have an opportunity for meaningful involvement in the development of their child.

#### Early Learning Principles

The [Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning \(Kindergarten to Grade 3\): Guiding Principles, 2007](#) provides the philosophical and theoretical foundation for teaching and learning in the primary grades. The principles reflect current understandings and contemporary education research on young children, families, communities and schools.

*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 successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and on future participation in society.*

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The purpose of the guiding principles is to help Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers reflect on the nature of young children and their learning to make informed instructional decisions and create learning environments that are responsive to children's diverse needs; capabilities; learning styles; dispositions and cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds.

As depicted in the graphic, child development involves a diverse 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 through which children learn in and outside of school. In response to these differences, schools can build on children's diverse prior knowledge and experience.

### Kindergarten Learner Expectations



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### The Kindergarten Program

The Kindergarten program uses these Guiding Principles to create Kindergarten-specific principles, which are described briefly here and more fully in the [Kindergarten Program Statement](#).

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 coordinated community services to meet their needs.

These Kindergarten principles set the context for programming by fostering opportunities for children to develop and accomplish new learnings. Kindergarten strengthens a foundation for forming ideas, developing language, solving problems and expressing thoughts and feelings. The learner expectations of the [Kindergarten Program Statement](#) are composed of seven learning areas, which interrelate and 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 school.