



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Early Learning Program

In October 2009, the provincial government announced details for the first stages of a province-wide Early Learning Program (ELP) for four and five year olds. Full implementation of the Early Learning Program will take five years with further details coming at a later date (for the final two years.)

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board will have 23 classes for Year 1, which will start September, 2010.

Q. What is the Early Learning Program?

A. It is full-day, everyday kindergarten for 4 and 5 year olds. There will be a class size of about 26 students with an educator team of a Kindergarten Teacher and an Early Childhood Educator.

Q. How and when can I apply?

A. You may begin to apply in February at the school that your child would normally attend. As all schools will not be starting the program in 2010, your local school may not have the program next year.

Q. How many available spaces will there be at my school?

A. Class size for the program is about 26 students in each class. The number of classes was determined based on enrollment trends for that school from previous years. Some schools will have multiple classes. If a school is implementing the Early Learning Program, then all kindergarten classes become early learning classes, including French Immersion and Senior Kindergarten classes.

Q. How will the spaces be awarded? Will it be first come, first served?

A. Spaces will first be allocated to students who are in that school's catchment area. Principals will be asked to create waiting lists for students who may be interested, but would be out-of-boundary. Out of boundary applications will be awarded on a lottery basis, depending on remaining availability, after the school year begins.

Q. When will this program start?

A. The first 23 classes will begin in September 2010.

Q. Who can attend this program? What ages of students?

A. Any student who will be four-years-old or five-years-old by December 31, 2010, is eligible to enroll in the program for September 2010. The age is the same as for regular Kindergarten.

Q. If the Early Learning program is being implemented at my child's school can I choose to 'opt-out' and continue with the present model?

A. Yes, parents may elect to have their child continue to attend part-time. Parents should consider, however, the complexities of having their child involved half the time, in a full-time program.

Q. What are the program times? What would the drop-off and pick-up times be for the program?

A. The regular program times would be the same as the rest of the school. (ie. 8:20 - 2:40 or 9:00 - 3:15) The extended day portion of the program, which parents pay a fee for, could start at 6:30 or 7:00 am until the start of school, then from the end of the day until 6:00 pm. This before and after school portion of the program will run if there is a need for it and will be staffed by the Early Childhood Educators.

Q. Who will look after the children, a teacher or someone else?

A. The Early Childhood Educators will look after the children for the before and after-hours program. There will be two ECE's in each class. One will come in at 7:00 am and work until 1:00 pm and the other one will come in at 12 noon and stay until 6:00 pm. A teacher will be in the class during regular school hours.

Q. What will the cost to parents be?

A. There will be a cost to participate in the extended day portion of the program (before and after the normal school day). The exact cost for this part of the program has not been finalized at this time.

The Ministry of Education expectation is that fees must be reasonable but allow Boards to recover costs. Subsidies will be available for the before and after school program for those families who qualify.

Q. If I am eligible for a fee subsidy now for child care, will I still receive that subsidy in the extended day program?

A. Yes, if you are eligible for a subsidy you will still receive that support.

Q. What will the full-day early learning program look like?

A. Teachers and early childhood educators will work together to help children learn during the regular school day. Schools will also offer optional integrated programs before and after regular school hours, led by early childhood educators, for four- and five-year-olds.

This new approach to early learning offers children an enriched learning environment designed to help them develop the social, emotional, academic and physical skills that provide a good foundation for success in school and in life.

Q. Who will be teaching my children?

A. Certified teachers and registered early childhood educators will work together to help young students learn and grow during the regular school day. These educators will complement each other's skill sets and create a learning environment able to adapt to the unique needs of each child. With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, more students will get one-on-one attention and opportunities to learn together in small groups.

Q. Is full-day early learning mandatory for four- and five-year-olds?

A. No. The full-day learning program, like kindergarten, will remain optional for four- and five-year-olds. In Ontario, children are required to attend school once they turn six years old. Although Kindergarten is voluntary, 90 per cent of eligible children are enrolled.

Q. What will my child learn and do while in a full-day early learning program?

A. Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will better prepare them for school and for life. This will provide our youngest students with opportunities to socialize with their peers and develop the academic and social skills necessary for school, including laying the foundation for each child's reading, writing and math skills.

Q. Why full-day, everyday learning?

A. Many four- and five-year-olds already spend long days in a mix of child care and Kindergarten programs. Full-day early learning will create a seamless and integrated day for children.

Providing children with a stronger start on their learning will improve their reading, writing and math skills, provide a smoother transition to Grade 1 and increase their future achievement in school.