



2020–2021
Parent Handbook

Early Education Program



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1) Welcome to Early Education!



What an adventure awaits your little one as they head off to school: new friends, new experiences and new ways of having fun. While enjoying the time in the early education program your child will also be developing important skills that will prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Children will develop foundational skills for reading, writing, math, science, and more, as well as how to interact successfully with teachers and classmates.

The first five years of a child's life is a critical time of brain development where important brain connections occur and learning connections can be strengthened due to the plasticity or flexibility within the developing young brain. What happens in the first five years of life will impact them for the rest of their life in terms of learning, mental health and physical health outcomes. Please visit this website to learn more: <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-of-brain-development>

The philosophy of our program is founded on a child's need to feel valued and accepted. Within our Early Education Programs, developing a positive self-image and satisfying the natural curiosity of the children is fostered through the use of a variety of materials and activities. Suitable play materials will be presented in fun and creative activity centres supported by knowledgeable staff who can extend the child's experience and learning.

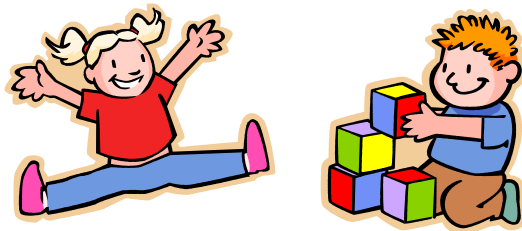
Children will be encouraged to use their imagination, develop initiative and independence, function both as a group member and an individual, and learn to share and cooperate with others. We will foster positive relations and respect for one another. Communication skills and socialization are keys to a successful future for your child. Opportunities to develop motor skills, both small muscles and big muscles, are a component of daily programming.

Children will be encouraged to develop their listening skills (through activities such as songs, stories, etc.) and to follow simple directions. We will provide opportunities (e.g. art, dress-up centres) which will enhance the creativity of all children. Our early education programs provide an inclusive environment, meeting

the needs of all children regardless of where they are at in development, by providing excellent child to adult ratios that encourage interaction among children and adults in a safe and relaxed manner.

The program focuses on language enrichment and speech development in all of its activities. Early education opportunities provide for the physical, social, intellectual, creative, and emotional development of all three and four year old children.

2) Guiding Principles



- 🧩 Experiences during early childhood years are crucial to a child's learning and development.
- 🧩 A safe and caring environment is necessary for learning.
- 🧩 Children learn through play and exploration.
- 🧩 Staff and families work as partners to support a child's development.
- 🧩 A team approach is used to address all areas of a child's development.
- 🧩 Active involvement in meaningful learning experiences includes challenges and successes.
- 🧩 Meeting all children and families, where they are currently at, is critical.
- 🧩 Decision making and responsibilities are shared.
- 🧩 Children learn and reflect what they know in different ways.
- 🧩 Children's needs are identified early and proactive steps are taken to address potential delays or challenges.
- 🧩 Our early education programs are ready to accommodate all children and adapt programs to ensure learning and success for all.

3) Staff

Our Early Education Program Team is comprised of a full time Early Learning Educator who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the early education program. The Early Learning Educator will be your child's teacher.



A team of well-trained and experienced early education educational assistants are also part of the day-to-day team in the classroom.

A Learning Support Teacher (LST) is responsible for setting the programming for children with any identified needs or delays. Their role includes the development, implementation and monitoring of Individualized Program Plans (IPPs). They also mentor the educational assistants in meeting the needs of children.

Lethbridge School Division has five Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) on staff who work to develop effective speech and language goals and activities in order to help all children work towards appropriate developmental milestones. One of these SLPs will be assigned to your child's school for ongoing support to children with identified needs. We also have one Occupational Therapist (OT) that can support children's needs with fine motor skills, sensory needs and daily living skills. At times, we also work with team members from outside agencies who may be supporting children with identified needs in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, mental health or behavioural needs.

4) School Calendar

The early education year follows the school year calendar for Lethbridge School Division. This is available online and also in the School Information Handbook Publication published annually. Early Education Program classes operate Monday through Thursday each week in the school calendar.

www.lethsd.ab.ca

Lethbridge School Division 2020-2021 School Year Calendar

July							August							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4								1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
							30	31					5	
September							October							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4						1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
27	28	29	30			21	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
													21	
November							December							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			
						20							14	
January							February							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
					1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28							
31						20							17	
March							April							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6						1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30		
						23							16	
May							June							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
						1			1	2	3	4	5	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30				
30	31					20							21	
Student Days							Teacher Days							
Sem 1							Sem 1							101
Sem 2							Sem 2							97
Total							Total							198

Approved by the Board of Trustees on January 28, 2020

5) Sample Daily Schedule



Morning Program 8:45am - 11:45am

8:45 - 10:20 Free Play
10:20 - 10:50 Snack
10:50 - 11:00 Story Time
11:00 - 11:35 Outdoor Play
11:38 - 11:45 Home Time

Afternoon Program 12:30pm – 3:30pm

12:30 – 2:05 Free Play
2:05 - 2:35 Snack
2:35 - 2:45 Story Time
2:45 - 3:20 Outdoor Play
3:23 - 3:30 Home Time



6) Registration Procedure

Children must be a minimum of 3 years old as of September 30th of the school year they are entering. Typically developing children must be toilet trained (this means not in diapers or pull ups). Children with severe developmental delays that meet Alberta Education support criteria are the exception to this or if an exceptional medical circumstance exists whereby your child is not able to be toilet trained (please indicate when registering). Children who turn 3 between September 30th and December 31st may enter the early education program after they turn 3 providing there is space available at that time.



Qualifications for entry as a child with identified educational needs, that may require additional support, should be verified with Isabelle Plomp, Lethbridge School Division's Early Childhood Coordinator at 403-380-5291 or via email isabelle.plomp@lethsd.ab.ca. This may include children experiencing speech and language delays, motor challenges, behaviour challenges, medical conditions that affect learning, etc. Please contact her for further information.

Fees:

Fees are required for early education programming as Alberta Education only provides funding for children with an identified delay meeting specific criteria. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is required at the time of registration. Children accessing 4 half days of programming per week pay \$185/month while those accessing 2 half days of programming per week pay \$95/month. Monthly fees can only be paid via the School Cash Online system. Non-payment of monthly fees may result in your child being asked to exit the program.

Some fees may be covered for children meeting education funding criteria. These would include children with identified delays (assessment documentation must be provided that meets Alberta Education eligibility criteria) or children just learning English (screening process is required), providing they meet educational age requirements.

The registration process is considered complete when we have received:

-  your non-refundable \$40 deposit (paid in cash or School Cash Online)
-  completed registration forms

General Policies

Arrivals and Departures

1. Please arrive no sooner than 5 minutes before the program begins.
2. Children should be taken to the bathroom before they come into class.
3. Parents (or adult care-giver) are required to bring their child to the early education meeting point to confirm their child's arrival with staff so that the time and person dropping the child off can be recorded. At the end of programming staff will record the time and person picking the child up.
4. Please pick up your child on time – arriving 5 minutes prior to the end of class is advisable. The school must be notified if you are going to be late. Repeated late pick-ups may result in your child being asked to leave the program. Staff working and break time needs to be respected.
5. If someone other than you will be picking your child, up you must notify the school in advance. Photo ID may be required from the person picking your child up.
6. Parents are responsible for the supervision of younger siblings at all times.

Illness and Absences

1. If your child will be absent please call the school (or the 1-800 number if your school has the Safe Arrivals program) to let us know. If your child is sick or showing symptoms, please keep him/her at home.
2. Parents/caregivers are responsible to use the Pandemic Screening Questionnaire each day your child will attend programming. Children should not attend school if they have any of the symptoms on the questionnaire. Please proceed with screening for COVID-19 if you answer “yes” to any of the questions and follow the prescribed protocols. For further information regarding Lethbridge School Division protocols relating to COVID-19, please see the division website (www.lethsd.ab.ca). For illness not related to COVID-19 please keep your child at home for 24 hours following a fever, vomiting, or starting a new prescribed medication.
3. If your child is ill we will isolate them immediately and contact you to pick him/her up immediately.
4. Staff will not administer medication. (Except in the case of a life-threatening allergy.)
5. In the event of a medical emergency, the hospital will be called and the parents notified.

6. Please report any communicable diseases to the early education program staff as soon as you are aware. (Example measles, mumps, chicken pox, pink eye, etc.)

Emergency Procedures

Please refer to the school handbook for procedures relating to fire drills, lockdowns, etc.

Setting Limits

We employ strategies that are proactive so that desirable behaviour occurs. Positive praise is integral to our program. Catching a child being good and providing positive descriptive praise goes a long way to setting the expectations for others.

Incidents of inappropriate behavior will occur at times. In these cases a calm voice is used to gain the child's attention, using their name. An adult may guide the child away from the situation and the child will be reminded of our class rules and limits. Every effort will be made to assist the child in understanding his or her actions. The child will then be redirected to another centre or activity.

Problem-solving skills are learned along the way. Choices, as well as natural or logical consequences, will be explained to clarify a given situation. A specific toy may need to be removed or a child may at times benefit from a quiet time away from the busy activities. The child's dignity and self-respect will be maintained at all times.

Washroom Use

1. It is recommended that you have your child visit the washroom prior to leaving your home. This would include washing hands to reduce allergy risks and germs.
2. Children should tell the teacher when they need to use the washroom.
3. We will have a washroom break with groups of children where we use the toilet and wash our hands.
4. An adult always accompanies children to the washroom if there is not one within the classroom.
5. Children need to be independent in using the washroom (able to pull down pants, wipe their bottom, etc.) unless they have an identified delay.

Snack

Please alert your child's Early Learning Educator to any food allergies your child may have. Foods which are prohibited in the classroom include nuts and seeds, hard candies, caramels/toffee, chewing gum and gumdrops. Water is the best beverage for young children.



Speech and Language Support for your Child

We pride ourselves on offering extensive speech and language support to all children within our programs. Extra supports are given in this area to those children who come to us as having identified speech or language needs. Our Early Education Program classrooms provide rich language environments through which children build communication skills and socialization. Some children will receive additional speech and language supports throughout the programming day which is supervised by one of our Speech Language Pathologists.

Occupational and Physiotherapy Services

These services are provided when necessary and are delivered by our Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist that make onsite visits for specific children as well as offering ideas and consultation to the early education team.

Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent home regularly informing you of upcoming events. A month by month calendar will be included to remind you of special events and items such as helper days. Your Early Childhood Educator also connects to parents through apps to update parents, share important reminders and sometimes share documentation of your child learning in the classroom.

Clothing and Supplies

1. Please label ALL items: coats, boots, shoes, hats, mittens, lunch bags, water bottles, and backpacks.
2. Inside shoes are necessary in case of a fire drill, especially when it is rainy or snowy.
3. Dress the children according to the weather as we go outside for activities everyday as long as there is not a weather warning (e.g.frostbite). We do go out in the rain, in the snow and the wind, so please send your child prepared.
4. Clothing that is easy to pull up and down makes toileting easier for your child.



5. Your child will bring their own healthy snack each day. Keep in mind it is a snack and not a meal. Teach your child how to open various snack containers and packages so there will be minimal, if any, assistance required by an adult.
6. Clothing should be washable as we engage in creative activities involving paint, glue, etc. and it may get messy. Keeping a change of clothes in your child's backpack is always a good idea.

Parent Involvement

We usually welcome your attendance and participation in our program as children enjoy sharing their day with a parent, grandparent or caregiver. This is not an option at this current time due to pandemic protocols as we need to keep the classroom safe for your child, their classmates and our staff.



Parents have very special skills which they may like to share with the class. Please let your child's teacher know if you are willing to talk to the class about your job, a special interest or any other relevant topic. We may be able to arrange to have you video a short presentation to share in class with the children.

Tip for Parents

If this is your first early education experience you may have many questions regarding what will happen. Please feel free to ask any questions as they arise.

As this may be your child's first experience away from you for any significant time please determine a plan of action with the Early Learning Educator if your child may have difficulty separating from you. Rest assured that the teacher will inform you of any prolonged upset on the part of your child after you have dropped off your child. Parents will not be allowed in the classroom at present due to pandemic protocols so please arrange a plan ahead of time if needed.

To provide the best opportunity for success, it is critical that young children have sufficient rest in order to learn and function best. Children ages 3 – 5 years old should be getting 10 – 12 hours of sleep per night.

Another advantage you can provide for your child is good nutrition as developing brains and bodies require good nutrients in order to develop well. Please consult the Canadian Food Guide for more information – <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

One of the best activities you can do with your child to build strong brains is

to talk with them many times through the day. Give them your full attention and have back and forth conversations. This builds strong brain connections, buffers stress in young children and provides so much learning! Play with your children and look at books together to further strengthen their development.

Withdrawal Policy

Should the need arise to withdraw your child from the program during the year the following fee process applies:

- If 30-day notice is given regarding the withdrawal date, and the child leaves part-way through a month, they would receive a pro-rated reimbursement for the portion of the month not attended.
- Should a child exit the program without a 30-day notice, part way through a month, there will be no refund for the remainder of the days within the month of exit.

Non Payment of Fees

Non-payment of fees may result in your child being asked to leave the program. We operate under the School Act, and as such, are a non-subsidized program and we are reliant upon fee payment to remain in operation.



We look forward to meeting you and your family and welcoming your child into the exciting world of early education!