

2009: B12

MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Nancy Naylor
Assistant Deputy Minister

DATE: October 27, 2009

SUBJECT: **Early Learning Program –
Planning for 2010-11 and 2011-12**

As announced by the Premier today, the first phase of Ontario's plan for a province-wide Early Learning Program (ELP) is the implementation of full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds.

The program will be offered in a number of schools throughout the province starting in September 2010. The goal is to make the program available over time to all four- and five-year-old students. This multi-year, phased-in approach will help ensure a smooth transition to a mature ELP, while recognizing current economic and fiscal realities.

As noted in today's memorandum from the Deputy Minister of Education, entitled *Implementation of Early Learning for four- and five-year-olds: Year One*, the purpose of this B-memorandum is to provide school boards with information about the initial planning steps that boards must take to prepare for Years One and Two of ELP implementation (2010-11 and 2011-12). Appendix 1 lists the initial board-by-board planning allocations of ELP pupil places for these two years.

The government has committed \$200M in 2010-11 to support the first year of full-day early learning for up to 35,000 four- and five-year-olds – 15 percent of the Junior and Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK) population. This investment will grow to \$300M in 2011-12 to expand the full-day program to approximately 20 percent of the JK/SK population. The goal is to have early learning fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16.

As the ELP is a school-based initiative, school boards will have a lead role in achieving the province's vision for early learning. The Ministry of Education will work with and support school boards in this leadership role. Successful implementation of the ELP will require boards to consult with their school communities and other key partners, including coterminous boards, Best Start networks, and Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards.

To support this collaborative approach and address the needs of the childcare sector, the Ministry will also work closely with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

A. PROGRAM MODEL

Overview – two basic components

The ELP will be offered during the school year. The program model has two basic components:

1. A *core* component that will be offered each school day during the hours of the instructional program (for example, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.). In each classroom, an educator team of one certified teacher and one early childhood educator (ECE) registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators will work side by side to deliver the program.
2. An *extended day* component that will be available before and after school (for example, 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.). A student's participation in this component of the program is at the option of parents and guardians, but boards must offer the program where there is sufficient enrolment to make a program viable. This component of the ELP will be led by ECEs. It will be funded through parent fees set on a cost-recovery basis, with subsidies available for families who need help with the cost. Further information about fees will be provided in the near future.

Class size and child-adult ratio

The class size standard for the ELP will be an average of 26 students on a board-wide basis, which provides for an average child-adult ratio of 13:1.

While this standard gives boards flexibility, boards are expected to conform closely to the standard and organize ELP classes so that almost all these classes have 26 students.

As with current JK/SK class sizes, boards will report ELP class sizes, which will be published on the Class-Size Tracker. However, ELP classes will be excluded from each board's calculation and reporting of primary class sizes and board-wide elementary class size average. JK/SK classes outside the ELP will continue to be subject to the primary class size standards and will be included in the calculation and reporting of class sizes at the primary and elementary levels.

B. EARLY YEARS LEADER

The implementation of the Early Learning Program is a priority throughout the next year. Each board must ensure that it is assigning sufficient resources to planning, management and reporting activities.

To provide leadership at the board level, the Ministry asks that each board appoint a senior official as its Early Years Leader. The primary responsibilities of the Early Years Leader will be to co-ordinate the board's implementation of ELP, facilitate board consultations, and act as a link to the Ministry. Boards are encouraged to begin the selection of an Early Years Leader as soon as possible.

C. FUNDING

Operating funding

In 2010-11, all JK/SK students will continue to be funded through the GSN for a half-day. Each JK and SK student enrolled in the ELP will continue to be counted as 0.5 of a student for the purposes of calculating Average Daily Enrolment.

Funding for the additional half-day of the core Early Learning Program will be calculated based on GSN benchmarks, but will be provided outside the GSN. It is anticipated that this funding will move into the GSN in future years.

Funding for ELP will be allocated in two stages:

- *Stage 1*

Prior to the selection of Year One schools, each board's allocation is based on approximately 15 percent of projected JK/SK enrolment in 2010-11, funded at per-pupil benchmarks of \$3,827.81 for English-language public boards and \$3,860.81 for all other boards. Appendix 2 shows the 2010-11 allocation for each board (ELP pupil places × per-pupil benchmark).

These per-pupil benchmarks include funding for the incremental classroom costs of the ELP, including teachers and ECEs, and for the Special Education Per-Pupil Amount and School Operations. Preparation time for teachers is included in the benchmarks to reflect the 2010-11 standard of 220 minutes per week. Appendix 3 shows in detail how the per-pupil funding benchmarks have been generated.

- *Stage 2*

After Year One schools are identified, boards will be allocated additional funding to recognize selected grants that change based on the individual schools chosen and teachers' qualifications and experience: School Foundation, Remote and Rural, Teacher Qualifications and Experience, Student Transportation (see **Student transportation** below, p. 4), and School Renewal. English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development and Perfectionnement du français allocations will not be included, as eligible JK/SK students generate GSN funding from these allocations on a head-count basis.

Capital funding

For Year One, school boards will be expected to identify schools where the ELP can be introduced without capital construction or renovations. Boards are also asked to identify priority sites for Year Two implementation that minimize the need for new capital funding. It is anticipated, however, that some boards may require some capital funding to support Year Two sites.

The Ministry will initiate a capital planning process with all boards to identify what addition and renovation projects are required, and the capital funding needed, to ensure that school facilities can support the implementation of the ELP. This planning process is being developed, and the Ministry will seek board input before launching the process in February 2010.

Student transportation

The Ministry will review transportation cost requirements for Year One beginning in February or March 2010. School boards are asked to advise their transportation consortia of the proposed sites for Year One and the anticipated enrolment following the completion of JK and SK registration.

Transportation consortia will need to review existing routing and the extent to which new students can be carried on existing routes. Where additional buses are required to support the Year One schools, consortia may submit a business case for additional funding to the Ministry. Priority will be given to consortia that have established a “high” efficiency rating for routing through Efficiency and Effectiveness (E&E) reviews.

It is anticipated that an annual review of transportation requirements will be undertaken to support the full implementation of the ELP within the context of the work underway to bring all transportation consortia to a “high” rating in routing and all other E&E categories.

D. PLANNING

To assist boards in preparing their preliminary plans for the ELP in 2010-11, the Ministry has developed a planning template, titled *Early Learning – Phase 1 School Selection*. This form, with the information pre-loaded for each board by the Ministry, will be e-mailed to directors of education shortly. A sample of the template is also attached.

Each school board must submit the completed template, approved by the board’s Chair and Director of Education, to ELP_AJE@Ontario.ca by **November 30, 2009**.

The Ministry will review the preliminary plans in consultation with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and will work with each board to ensure the board’s plan meets the requirements and criteria described below. This process will be completed by **January 15, 2010**.

Consultation requirements

Coterminous boards are required to consult and plan together regarding site selection. To ensure boards benefit from municipal expertise in managing and delivering child care services, boards are also expected to consult with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards and local Best Start Networks. The planning template includes a section that asks each board to describe the consultation processes and summarize the results.

Criteria for selection

In prioritizing schools for the ELP in 2010-11, boards are expected to meet two requirements:

1. Selected schools should be schools where all JK/SK classes in 2010-11 can comply with the new ELP model. This will avoid situations where two or more JK/SK program models are offered by a single school.
2. The ELP classrooms opened in 2010-11 should be new full-day JK/SK classrooms.

Boards that are currently offering full-day JK/SK programs in some schools are expected to introduce the ELP in other schools. Boards that currently offer full day JK/SK programs in all their schools are being provided with ELP funding, but will need to develop a plan in collaboration with the Ministry for the use of these funds to support students.

In addition to these two requirements, the Ministry has set the following criteria to guide boards in selecting schools. These criteria are intended as guidelines. A school does not need to meet all of the criteria to be recommended. Each board's recommendations should address these criteria, but should also consider (1) the needs and circumstances of students, parents and communities; (2) input received through consultations with Best Start networks and Consolidated Municipal Service Managers in the board's jurisdiction; and (3) consultations with coterminous school boards.

The criteria are:

Availability of space

As noted above (**Capital funding**, p. 3), priority should be given to schools that have space for full day JK/SK programming in 2010 without requiring new capital construction or renovations.

Recommended schools should be schools that the board anticipates will remain open over the next five years.

Community need

For 2010, one of the goals of the ELP is to locate a portion of the ELP spaces in schools that serve low-income neighbourhoods.

Minimal impact on existing child care and early years programs

In developing the best solutions for four- and five-year-olds in their communities, boards should take into account the local availability of licensed child care. Boards will need to consider whether the community will be best served by selecting schools with existing child care programs, schools near existing licensed child care, or schools in neighbourhoods where no child care is currently available for four- and five-year-olds.

Student achievement

Each board should identify schools where students would benefit significantly from the increased learning opportunities offered by the ELP. This may include schools where many families struggle with poverty, language issues or other challenges. It may include schools where student achievement is static and students would benefit from increased learning and individual attention.

Readiness to implement

Boards should assess the level of community and school readiness to support ELP implementation.

E. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Funding for the additional half day of the core Early Learning Program will be provided outside of the GSN in Year One. Board transfer payment agreements for this funding will incorporate accountability and reporting requirements for Year One. Longer term accountability requirements, including performance measures, are being developed and will be provided at a later date.

As stated above (**Class size and child-adult ratio**, p. 2), ELP class sizes will be reported on the Class-Size Tracker. Boards are expected to organize ELP classes in conformity with the standard of 26 students in a class.

F. SUPPORT AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The Deputy Minister's memorandum of today's date highlights some of the steps the Ministry will take to support school boards in implementing the ELP. These steps include curriculum development, professional development and networking, and generic communications materials.

Early Learning Education Officers will be available in each Regional Office to assist you and should be your first contact for further information about the ELP. They will be preparing a list of board and Ministry contacts and organizing regional meetings to support Year One implementation.

For assistance in completing the *Early Learning – Phase 1 School Selection* template, please contact the Finance Officer assigned to your board. For further information about future capital needs, please contact the Capital Analyst assigned to your board.

If you require further information about the ELP, please contact:

ELP implementation	Kit Rankin Director, Field Services Branch	(416) 325-2588 kit.rankin@ontario.ca
ELP policy and program	Jill Vienneau Director, Early Learning Policy and Program Branch	(416) 314-2190 jill.vienneau@ontario.ca
Funding	Didem Proulx Director, Education Finance Branch	(416) 327-9060 didem.proulx@ontario.ca
Capital	Nancy Whynot Director, Capital Programs Branch	(416) 325-4030 nancy.whynot@ontario.ca

With the introduction of the Early Learning Program, Ontario's education system has an opportunity to renew and extend its commitment to the education and development of our youngest students. While the successful implementation of this initiative will present challenges, publicly funded education has already demonstrated its capacity to achieve positive change that benefits students, parents, and communities. The Ministry looks

forward to a co-operative effort with school boards and schools to make our province's vision for early learning a reality.



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