



**Sturgeon
Public Schools**
Dare to reimagine Learning

Growing a Strong Future: Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)



Parent Handbook
2023-2024

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Welcome to Early Childhood Education



Director's Message

Welcome to Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)!

The first day of school is a new and exciting adventure for children, parents, and teachers. As your child's educational support team, we look forward to forming a partnership with you in the coming months to make your child's Pre-K year successful.

This handbook has been created to help make the transition from home to school a positive experience. The information in this handbook will provide you with important details about the program.

The successful operation of our program depends on all partners working together towards the best interest of your child, to help facilitate a child's readiness for school and future academic, social and emotional success.

Our classroom and consultant teams are valuable partners who can provide your child with support and services to help your child grow.

Together, we will create opportunities for success for each child to reach their full potential.

Enjoy the Experience!

Shelley Greenwood PMEd, BEd

Director, Learning Services

*"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
William Butler Yeats*

Early Childhood Philosophy

To meet the needs of children by nurturing and validating their strengths and supporting children using a team approach, to reach their optimal development within a safe, play-based, Reggio-inspired environment.



In Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K), we value:

- *Celebrating individual strengths and engaging their curiosity*
- *Inspiring a love of life-long learning in children*
- *Connecting with compassion and creating a safe place for learning*
- *Communicating in a positive, clear, open and honest manner*

Our Program

The program focuses on building skills in these areas:

- communication
 - social/emotional development
 - physical development
 - academic readiness
 - cognitive enrichment
- Classes are half day (am or pm)
 - Children born in 2019 with mild moderate or severe needs, or those who are cognitively advanced/gifted are eligible to qualify
 - Children born in 2020 with a significant need and are Program Unit Funded (PUF) are eligible to qualify
 - Our program is offered at designated sites within the division
 - Pre-K is teacher directed by fully qualified teachers with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Programming is supported by consultants, therapy assistants and educational assistants
 - Children who qualify for Program Unit Funding may be eligible for 2 years of Pre-K programming depending on age



Pre-K Program Principles

Principle One

Young children learn best when activities and expectations meet their developmental levels.

Principle Two

Young children learn and develop best through play opportunities that provoke curiosity and exploration of a wide variety of materials during unstructured and structured activities.

Principle Three

Young children develop skills through play experiences that involve touching, moving, listening, seeing, hearing and exploring both indoors and outdoors and express their knowledge in a variety of ways.

Principle Four Young children develop social relationships skills

with peers and adults through engaging in collaborative play activities.

Principle Five

Parents and families are key members of the educational team!

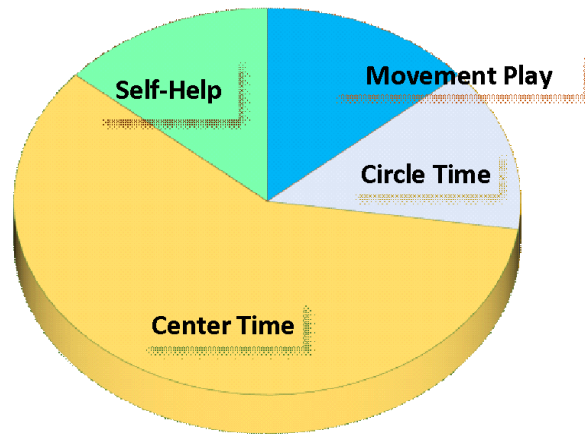


Class Time

What a Day in Pre-K Looks Like

Pre-K classrooms are busy places! Children participate in a variety of different learning opportunities at school. Activities may include: circle time, center time, library, movement, snack time, and play or exploration activities outdoors. Speech therapy intervention often takes place during center time. Occupational Therapist and Educational Psychologist provide consultation strategies based on classroom observations to help children to be ready to learn.

- **Movement Play** – may include creative movement, dance, gross motor games, obstacle courses, activities with equipment, scooters, outside play, gym time and other movement breaks.



- **Circle Time** – structured teaching time that includes a wide variety of activities such as books and stories, action songs, whole group games or other learning activities.
- **Self-help** – includes snack time, dressing, and bathroom breaks.
- **Center Time** – learning centers offer children an opportunity to learn through using a wide variety of play activities and materials.
See the following descriptions of what skills can be developed during center time play with other children.

Center Time

Skills children learn through center time play

Center	Skills Acquired
Arts and creative expression	Creativity, fine motor skills, cutting, coloring, painting, gluing, tracing, following simple directions, making choices, expressing preferences, illustrating thoughts, social skills, communication, concept development (colors, shapes, numbers and letters)
Literacy center	Pre-literacy skills, speech and language skills, listening skills, logical thinking, learning that reading is interesting and fun
Quiet center	Self-regulation space for quiet & calming and/or gross motor movement to positively expend energy
Construction (building blocks of various kinds)	Imaginative play, building, socializing, problem solving, sharing, cooperation
Sensory Play (Sand, water, beans, Play dough, plasticine)	Socialization, tactile, discovery, pouring, blowing bubbles, turn taking, cooperative/imaginative play
Dramatic play (house, restaurant, school, store, vet, office, post office)	Interactive, imaginative and cooperative play, problem solving, helping, turn taking, nurturing, socialization, role playing real-life situations
Exploration play (Loose parts/ Imagination station)	Fine motor & gross motor skills, socialization, manipulating, imaginative play, discovery
Themed Toys (vehicles, animals, food, dinosaurs, dolls)	Fine motor & gross motor skills, socialization, sharing, turn-taking, manipulating
Puzzles and games	Fine motor coordination, matching, problem solving, independent, parallel and interactive play, concepts (shapes, numbers, colors and letters)
Science / Nature Center	Fine motor, manipulating, rolling, imaginative play, sharing, turn taking, socialization, tactile and color recognition

Parents

The First and Most Influential Teachers



Pre-K will help prepare your child for a successful school career. As parents, you are your child's first and most influential teachers.

There are many ways you can spark your child's love for learning.

- ✓ **Read with your child every day.** It encourages a love for reading and develops their language skills.
- ✓ **Allow your child to explore the world around them.** Encourage them to be curious! Explore with them!
- ✓ **Talk with your child about the events of the day.** Ask them what they think and how they feel. Good communication skills will carry your child throughout their life.
- ✓ **Teach your child the skills to become independent.** Let them dress themselves and encourage them to ask for help if they need it. Allow them to care for their own belongings. Independence helps build children's self-confidence!

Families & Teachers

Forming a Collaborative Partnership

Commitment from the Program

- ✓ High quality educational programming.
- ✓ Professional program support/consultation /collaboration (Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Behavior Support, and Educational Psychologist) is provided, based on a child's needs.
- ✓ Regular communication between school and home.
- ✓ Individualized Program Plan (IPP) for all children with identified needs.
- ✓ Approachable and caring staff.
- ✓ Use of current and best practice strategies for early childhood education and therapeutic intervention and/or consultation.
- ✓ A positive and playful learning environment.

Parent Involvement

- ✓ Attendance at Individualized Program Plan (IPP) Review meetings two or three times a year to stay informed about your child's progress and development.
- ✓ Volunteer in the classroom during the school year. This is a great way to be engaged in your child's educational programming.
- ✓ Volunteer on a field trip. Children love having parents join on these special events, and it is a great way to support your child's program and have fun with them!
- ✓ Volunteers can be other family members, such as a grandparent, can volunteer!
Note: Criminal record checks are required for all volunteers.



Pre-Kindergarten Team

Teachers

Pre-K teachers are fully qualified with a Bachelor's Degree in Education and are members of the Alberta Teacher's Association. Pre-K teachers use developmentally appropriate teaching practices, focusing on teaching in ways that match the way children develop and learn. This approach sets the stage for children's curiosity and imaginations to be sparked to motivate them to learn! Teachers choose activities based on their knowledge of child development and understanding of the needs of the children in their class. Teachers use the children's interests as a way to keep children engaged!

Educational Assistants

The Education Assistant (EA) supports children to maximize their learning potential. We all learn in different ways and EAs provide one-on-one and small group support to children. The EA works directly under the supervision of the classroom teacher. Education Assistants accept direction and coaching regarding therapeutic strategies from the consultant team.

Speech-Language Pathologists

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP) work with children to help develop all aspects of their communication skills. Age-appropriate skills will be integrated into the classroom to develop children's: speech sounds, understanding of language, use of language, social communication, and pre-literacy skills. Children with identified needs will also be seen individually and in small groups to target specific goals. Communication goals are supported by: the classroom staff and the family in collaboration with speech-language pathologists. Assessments will be used as needed to determine a child's development and progress.

Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychologists for Early Childhood Education support the program in a variety of ways. The Psychologist's services can include: assessments for eligibility for the Pre-K program, guidance to program staff, and consultations/ collaboration with other professionals. They make recommendations for Individual Program Plan (IPP) goals and for classroom strategies to help promote positive behaviour support. They also help coordinate referrals to other agencies if needed.

Occupational Therapists

In Occupational Therapy (OT), the word occupation means the variety of things that occupy us, or the tasks we do each day. For children, occupations refer to play and learning, leisure, and self-care. Occupational Therapists help provide strategies to promote fine motor, self-help or sensory regulation skill development at school and home, so that children are ready to learn, and participate fully in activities. Assistance may also be provided to address equipment needs, access to technology and classroom strategies/modifications.

Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA)

OTAs work under the supervision of Occupational Therapists. An Occupational Therapy Assistant may carry out programming related to OT scope of practice areas, for children with OT needs at school.

Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPA)

SLPAs work under the supervision of Speech-Language Pathologists. A Speech-Language Pathology Assistant may carry out programming related to SLP scope of practice areas and offer small group or one to one intervention for children with speech and language needs at school.

Psychology Assistant

Psychology Assistants work under the supervision of Psychologist. A Psychology Assistant provides support to and may carry out programming as directed by the Psychologist, for children with social-emotional/behavioural needs at school.

EA Coach

Provides direct support, training, collaboration, and coaching for Educational Assistants who are supporting children with complex medical, behavioural, and/or communication needs.



Creative Curriculum

A Framework for Learning through Play

“Developmentally appropriate practice means teaching in ways that match the way children develop and learn so as to promote their optimal development and learning.”

-The Creative Curriculum, Dodge, Colker, Heroman & Bickert 2010, pg. 3

The Creative Curriculum Checklist and documentation are used to help guide programming and evaluate children’s progress.

The Creative Curriculum is based on research on how children learn. The application of this body of knowledge has been organized into a teaching guide that focuses on providing children with developmentally appropriate activities. It is well documented that children learn best through play through activities that match their developmental level, and that are based on their interests.

Our Pre-K program approach is to develop a lifelong passion for learning and exploration. The focus is on children's natural development and close connection to their environment.

Children are viewed as capable, creative, curious and full of potential. They are active participants in education, and activities are often built around the interests expressed by the children in the class.

The following curricular areas are focused on:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Early Learning Readiness
- Language and Communication Development
- Social/Emotional Skills
- Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Positive Behaviour Support

Positive Behaviour Support is a well-documented approach to bring out the best behaviour in children. Our Pre-K Program focus is on building positive relationships, developing positive classroom environments, teaching appropriate skills and establishing expectations.

In Pre-K we focus on 3 simple expectations that capture the key components of this approach:

- 1- **BE SAFE**
- 2- **BE A FRIEND**
- 3- **BE A LEARNER**

The following strategies are applied in the classroom:

- Recognize that all behaviour communicates a need
- Build a relationship FIRST
- “Catch Them Being Good” approach
- Teaching “collaborative social problem-solving”
- Encouragement and praise (specific, sincere)
- Change the environment to be child-friendly
- Direct teaching of how to identify & respond to emotions
- Teach and demonstrate alternative, replacement behaviour
- Set limits and provide choices
- Use Natural and Logical Consequences
- Providing “Break time” or time away when needed
- “Listen with the heart”, meaning responding to what your child is feeling, rather than only what they are saying

Further information

Program Unit Funding (PUF)

Some children in Pre-K may qualify for Program Unit Funding (PUF). PUF focuses on developing extensive early childhood readiness skills with specific programming tailored to the individual needs of the child. It is designed for children aged between 2 years 8 months and 4 year 7 months (as of Sept. 1st of the school year), who have a severe diagnosed need or difficulty.

Individualized Program Plan (IPP)

An Individual Program Plan (IPP) is a planning document that identifies the individual goals your child will work towards during the school year. An IPP is developed to address the specific, individual educational needs of your child. It involves parents, teachers and consultant staff. It is a document that helps the teacher and team monitor your child's progress and communicates that progress to parents.

Disability Services (DS) Contract

Sturgeon Public Schools is a service provider for specialized services through Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD). Families who have children with a severe disability may be eligible for this service. The term severe disability refers to the degree to which a child is limited in their ability to function in normal daily activities and the extra care demands for their parents. The goal of specialized services through the Disability Services (DS) team to provides in-home consultant services and support to help parents in successfully meeting their child's unique needs.

Contact Information

For further information please contact
Sturgeon Public Schools Central Office at

780-939-4341 ext.1257

or visit our website at

www.sturgeon.ab.ca

Pre-K Parent Handbook
Compiled by the Sturgeon Public Schools
Early Childhood Education Team

