

## **Early Learning Kindergarten Program – Regional Session**

The Ministry of Education is presently holding regional meetings for the review of curriculum for the early learning kindergarten (ELK) program. The GTA meeting has already taken place and the summaries below are based on that experience. The first section outlines what you can expect on that day and the subsequent section provides a synopsis of the main issues for teachers to consider upon attending this session:

### **What to expect?**

#### **Participants**

The participants at the session included the following:

- Board teams (2 Kindergarten teachers, 2 Grade One teachers, a principal, a board program consultant and a superintendent). The Kindergarten teachers represented were the teachers who were at the proposed full day learning schools for each board;
- One or two representatives from E.C.E. groups;
- Representatives from the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators;
- Representatives from the Ministry of Community and Social Services;
- Jill Snider and Karen Gill from the Ministry of Education, Curriculum Branch.

#### **Overview**

The day was guided by an agenda and a power point presentation which the Ministry would not share. Hand-outs for the activities were numbered and required to be returned so there was no written materials that any participant would have at the end of the session. The following are notes from the day using information from the power point presentation.

Of major interest is the title of the program which includes Kindergarten in the title—the new program is called Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP). The following are notes from the slides:

#### **Setting the context**

- To provide info about the Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP)
- To gather feedback on segments of the draft revised Introduction and revised Expectations
- To gather advice about resources and training to support implementation
- Focus on day school program – regular and extended – learning and teaching

#### **Program Development**

- Announced by Premier in Fall 2009
- Full-day learning program is being developed in same manner as other EDU curriculum development
- Same process in FLEPPB (French)
- Working with other branches and EL Division
- Focus groups and consultations with teachers and ECEs, CAATs, Faculties, etc.
- Draft day program including front matter and expectations reflecting key elements

- Developing a complementary extended learning program
- Need to develop training for board teams for ECEs, Teachers, Principals for Spring/Summer 2010
- Supporting 1<sup>st</sup> year of implementation by gathering feedback to inform revisions
- Finalizing program in spring 2011
- Providing ongoing training and support

### **Program Similarities**

Analysis of current Kindergarten document and early learning programs (e.g., ELECT and Every Child/Every Opportunity) illustrates common elements and beliefs including:

- Early childhood development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health

### **Program Differences**

- Approach and organizational structure differs in various programs
- In K program, the organizational structure is around areas of learning: Personal and Social Development, etc.
- K focuses on 4 and 5 yr olds; EL programs may extend from infancy through 8;

### **Timelines**

- Nov: initial discussions begin
- Dec: focus groups and discussions; begin initial draft development
- Jan: regular consultation for feedback and advice and focus groups continue; extended program development begins
- Feb: revisions to original drafts; resource development begins
- March: approvals of draft programs
- April/May: delivery of initial board team training
- August: Early Learning Kindergarten (ELK) Team and Principal training
- September-January '11: feedback process Support development continues
- Feb – June 2011: program revision and finalization process
- May: training of Early Learning Kindergarten Teams continues
- Whether this training loop might be different than first training loop – we will attend to changes that are needed
- We value your suggestions and support

### **Draft Intro:**

- Sets a context for program development
- Describes the pedagogy (the “why” and some of the “how”) through the use of text, charts, and examples
- Includes sections on Roles and Responsibilities
- Assessment & Evaluation and considerations for Program Planning, including planning for students with special education needs.

- Series of activities; first two focus on selected excerpts from introduction to document; second focus on expectations;
- Background: all of the documents have an introductory section and most have the same purpose as this document; sets context for the documents;
- Not a strategy document: We can't give detailed information about what to do at the sand and water table; therefore it is a curriculum not a strategy document
- We are looking at Roles and responsibilities for all partners in the learning community-- critical piece is the program planning as a team

### **Key changes**

- Addition of big ideas for each learning area
- Addition of "initially...eventually" continuum
- Addition of interactions section which includes teacher to student; student to student, etc. (from ELECT).

Quote: "Trying to infuse ELECT into the Kindergarten document

One of the pieces we have tried to adapt into this program piece is trying to pull in the developmental continuum. Not all there; but there is an area where some of it is there in the program content. We are building an initially/eventually continuum."

### **Powerpoint Questions for Activity 1**

The ELK program merges two contexts for learning – the developmental context and the learning expectations context (these come from the three documents listed above).

In what ways does this section reflect the coming together of the two contexts?

What could be added to this section to better reflect the program intentions?

What additional supports or resources related to this section of the document, would help ELK teams plan programs that reflect the two contexts?

What other advice would you like to provide about this section?

### **Two set of expectations as in the Kindergarten document**

Overall - Which describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that children are expected to demonstrate by the end of two years in the ELK program

Specific – describe the knowledge and skills in greater detail

### **Key changes**

In most strands overall and specific expectations remain the same

However additions that address the developmental continuum include initially...eventually continuum and the Interactions section

**Activity two:** Same questions as in first activity.

### **Ministry response to question about the ELK Report Card**

There has been for the last couple of years work towards a new provincial Kindergarten Report card. That work has been done, however, because we are now having discussions about ELK there needs to be more discussion about reporting in Kindergarten. Discussion is underway on plans for finalized report in the spring if possible.

Request for advice on extended day: What we are looking for is advice in order that we can provide a complementary program. Goal is not to advance instruction per se during the extended period because if there is any additional instruction, then some kids would be disadvantaged (those who are not in extended program). That is why EDU needs advice for a complementary program.

### **Powerpoint slide for Building a Learning Community**

- Sets a context for program development
- Describes the pedagogy – the why and some of the how – through the use of text, charts and examples.  
Some key changes:
- Enhanced section on self-regulation and reference to self-regulation throughout the document where appropriate.

This section is problematic as it discusses the roles of the Early Learning Kindergarten Team as almost one and the same and everyone indicated the roles need to be defined separately and more clearly particularly differentiating the Teacher and the ECE but also the role of the Principal and parents.

### **The Extended Day Program**

How can the Extended Day program be structured to complement the Day Program?

What are some of the challenges in implementing the Extended Day program/? What supports are needed for ECEs, parents, Principals?

This area of discussion was interesting as there seems to be no clear direction as to whether the extended day program is supervised by the ECE's who are in the day program or by outside hired ECE's which would defeat the purpose of the consistent day for the child. There were no copies available at the tables and no-one had been encouraged to read them ahead of time.

### **Issues for Teachers**

1. The problem with this entire process was that the Ministry did not bring an outline or framework for the curriculum document in order to see the overall context of the pieces that we were asked to comment on. This is not the usual process for curriculum review at the board team level. Normally an overall framework document is provided so that the pieces being presented can be viewed in terms of all of the component parts that will be included in the document.
2. There were no resources on hand during the day. The curriculum is based on three documents: ELECT, The Kindergarten Curriculum, and the Every Child, Every Opportunity document. There were no copies available at the tables and no-one had been

encouraged to read them ahead of time. Many of the participants were not familiar at all with ELECT and Every Child, Every Opportunity and this put them at a disadvantage to make comments on the information presented. We recommend that our teachers become familiar with the above documents and bring copies to the session. The links to these documents are as follows:

Kindergarten curriculum

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kindercurrb.pdf>

Early Learning for Every Child

[http://www.gov.on.ca/children/graphics/stel02\\_183342.pdf](http://www.gov.on.ca/children/graphics/stel02_183342.pdf)

Every Child, Every Opportunity

[http://www.ontario.ca/ontprodconsume/groups/content/@gosp/documents/document/ont06\\_023393.pdf](http://www.ontario.ca/ontprodconsume/groups/content/@gosp/documents/document/ont06_023393.pdf)

3. We suggest that teachers be cautious as to their recommendations on the roles of the ELK team and preserve the role and responsibility of the teacher in this process particularly around assessment and evaluation. The only separate role for teachers appears to be the evaluation on the report card. There also needs to be clarity about the role of teachers and/or ELK team in the communication with parents.