

REVIEW OF FULL-DAY EARLY LEARNING KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM – DRAFT VERSION

Released April 14, 2010

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/kindergarten.html>

OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENT

The draft curriculum document which is to be implemented by all Kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators who will be placed in the selected full-day Kindergarten classes in September 2010 was released April 14, 2010 on the Ministry website and is now titled –The Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program.

The document is missing the introductory sections that are in the current Kindergarten Program document (2006) which include:

- Introduction - The importance of Kindergarten
- Building a Learning Community - Roles of child, teacher, parents, principal and community partners
- The Learning Program-Expectation overview
- Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting-principles, methods and reporting
- Teaching/Learning Approaches-inquiry, context, exploration, Literacy /Numeracy
- Some Considerations for Program Planning-developmental learning, environment, ELL, special education, inclusion, technology, health and safety

The document therefore begins with the Learning Areas: Program Expectations, which are divided into the following six areas of:

- Personal and Social Development – Divided into social and emotional development strands with their own overall expectations
- Language
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Health and Physical Education
- The Arts- divided into drama and dance, music and visual arts strands with their own overall expectations

The draft Full-Day ELKP is 108 pages in length as opposed to the current Kindergarten Program document which is 68 pages and includes the introductory sections which are almost half of the current document. However the overall expectations other than minor language changes are the same and the specific expectations are for the most part the same and have actually been reduced in number.

On page 2 of the draft document under the learning area of Personal and Social Development Overview, makes reference to the Early Learning- Kindergarten Team for the first time. The footer at the bottom of this page indicates that the Early

Learning-Kindergarten Team refers to the Kindergarten teachers and early childhood educator(s) in the Full—Day Early Learning-Kindergarten classroom and the term will be abbreviated to “EL-K team” throughout the document.

What makes the draft document larger than the current Kindergarten program is the format in which the specific expectations are presented. Each specific expectation gives a context for the child’s demonstration of the specific expectation and the EL-K Team’s (Teacher and ECE) interactions and responses to challenge and extend the child’s learning.

Also each of the overall learning expectations are tied initially to a” Big Idea “which has been a recommendation from many elementary curriculum reports including OECTA’s response to the elementary curriculum. It gives teachers a focus on the important concepts in Kindergarten and links them to overall expectations. Please note as in all curriculum documents it is the overall expectations that teachers report on in their evaluations not the specific expectations and therefore in this regard the overall responsibility for expectations has not changed in the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program.

WHAT’S THE SAME?

The following lists the similarities between the draft Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program and The Kindergarten Program Revised 2006.

- The Six Learning Areas are the same(as listed above)
- The overall Expectations are virtually the same with minor language changes and a reduction of one overall expectation in Science and Technology and an increase in 7 overall expectations in the Arts. However they are the same expectations but divided into the strands of drama and dance, music and visual arts
- The overview for each learning area as far as curriculum content is the same especially in mathematics and language

WHAT’S DIFFERENT

The following lists the differences between the draft Full-Day Early Learning Program and The Kindergarten Program Revised 2006:

- The Introductory sections are missing and it has been stated that this piece will be posted at a later date(This includes the sections listed above in the overview which speak to roles, assessment, evaluation and reporting)
- The Early Learning-Kindergarten Team has replaced the word teacher throughout the document except in the overview section on mathematics which has been taken directly from the current Kindergarten Program document word for word and uses the term teacher when making suggestions on how teachers can provide

learning opportunities that promote mathematical processes (pg. 47 in draft document and pg. 43 in Kindergarten Program 2006)

- The Big Ideas precede each learning area in relation to the corresponding overall expectations:

Personal and Social Development

Social Development Big Idea: Children are connected to others and contribute to their world.

Emotional Development Big Idea: Children have a strong sense of identity and well-being.

Language Big Idea: Children are effective communicators.

Mathematics Big Idea: Young children have a conceptual understanding of mathematics and of mathematical thinking and reasoning.

Science and Technology Big Idea: Children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new concepts in order to understand the world around them.

The Arts Bid Idea: Young children have an innate openness to artistic activities.

- The specific expectations are connected to each overall expectation but are numbered to correspond to the overall expectations. Therefore in Language overall expectation 1 corresponds to specific expectations 1.1 through to 1.11 and overall expectation 2 corresponds to specific expectations 2.1 through to 2.10 and so on. In Mathematics they have additional coding that defines the strands of number sense, measurement, patterning, geometry and spatial sense and data management and probability. In Mathematics overall expectation NS1(number sense) corresponds to specific expectations NS1.1 through to NS1.12. The same type of strand correspondence between the overall expectations and the specific expectation is found in the Arts where overall expectations for drama and dance being D1 corresponds to specific expectations D1.1 through to D1.2.
- The specific expectations are divided into three sections:
 1. The Specific Expectation written in full with some examples (e.g.) and in some instances it includes what is titled as “Professional Learning Conversations” which gives examples of how the EL-K team can collaborate on this specific learning expectation.

2. Making Connections: Ways in Which Children Might Demonstrate Their Learning: This area gives children's behavior in representing, saying or doing to basically "show what they know" around this specific expectation.
 3. Making Connections: Early Learning-Kindergarten Team's Intentional Interactions: This gives concrete examples of how the EL-K team can respond, challenge and extend the child's learning through specific interactions and learning activities.
- In all of the overviews in the six learning areas there are added sections that emphasize a greater focus on developmental learning. It promotes connections to real life experiences, building on prior knowledge and the focus on a play-based environment that promotes problem-solving, critical thinking inquiry and self-regulation. It is child-centred and uses observation as the key to program planning. There is more of a focus on process and less of a focus on content .

CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

- Some of the examples of Professional Learning Conversations between members of the EL-K team allude to times of day such as a breakfast meeting with parents, or the reading of a professional book together with parents or a planning meeting with parents. They mention drop-in coffee mornings which may or may not be a part of the school as it is not clear, but a drop-in to the classroom would be problematic. We need to be clear that these are only examples and not a mandate from the ministry and in turn from administration.
- Not having the introductory section to the document is problematic in that it does not answer the role and responsibility questions that most Kindergarten teachers need in order to make the team an effective one. The latest Early Learning Program legislation that was recently passed suggests that the teacher is in charge of the classroom and directs the curriculum in cooperation with the ECE. Hopefully this will be addressed when the introductory section is released.
- The ministry needs to be clear in the training sessions and in correspondence that the examples used in the areas of professional conversations and EL-K team intentional interactions are just that- examples, and not must do's as a part of the curriculum. The overall learning expectations are the policy and how they are implemented is up to the teacher's professional judgment.

GOOD NEWS

The good news in all of this is that the overall and specific learning expectations are virtually the same and have been preserved in a curriculum format that is similar to other curriculum documents. As a matter of fact there are less overall and specific expectations than in the previous document. What needs to be then made clear is that the addition of a

half-day to the Kindergarten classroom does not mean that we cram more content and push the program to meet academic standards. It means that children and teachers now have more time to learn and grow using the same expectations but allowing for deeper understanding, rich learning activities and a more meaningful learning experience that is play based and child-centred.

SUMMARY

Attached is the power point presentation that was given at the latest Ministry meeting on the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program which also gives the dates for the upcoming regional training and the proposed summer institutes. The summer institutes are voluntary but in order to attend you must have the teachers name submitted from the board. This process of going through the board to attend voluntary training or being selected from the board to attend destroys the voluntary nature of this professional learning opportunity. Teachers and ECE's should be allowed to register directly for the summer institutes.

Bill 242 has just recently been passed and clarifies the roles to a certain extent which will have an impact on the introductory sections of the Full-Day ELKP document. The details of the before and after school program are still outstanding. The planning details and logistics for implementing the program at the board and school level, such as equipment, supplies, resources, planning time, meeting times and more have not been addressed. It is details such as these that may cause friction at the classroom level if they are not well-planned, consistent and yet flexible.

We have been informed that classes may still be planned as JK, SK and blended JK /SK and this should be a consideration at the local level with teacher input.

The draft Full-Day ELKP has not in any great way changed the curriculum policy that our Kindergarten teachers have been implementing for the past few years as the overall expectations and specific expectations are basically the same. The fact that Kindergarten teachers will have more time to implement this program with children during the school day and in cooperation with an early childhood educator offers a great learning opportunity for all involved and the chance to shape the program in a positive way. We need to continue to provide our teachers with the support they need to ensure this happens.