

Early Years Accommodations in Schools

Reference Guide

Ministry of Education
*Informed by the Working Group
on Early Years Accommodation Costs in Schools*



Ministry of Education

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Introduction

Ontario's vision for the early years and child care is that all children and families have access to a range of high quality, inclusive, and affordable early years and child care programs and services that are child and family centred and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being.

- Ontario Renewed Early Years and Policy Framework, 2017

The government's schools-first approach has prioritized schools as the preferred location for early years programs in communities. Schools are viewed by the community as secure and trusted centres for children, and therefore are natural sites for early years programs. Many children are introduced to the school environment through early years programs, and the transition from early years programs to school can be facilitated by fostering strong connections between programs, providing a continuum of learning and care.

The prioritization of schools as the preferred early years locations has resulted in the need for a provincewide, flexible, and transparent early years accommodation cost methodology, and the need to share best practices related to early years service providers operating in schools.

In March 2017, the Ministry of Education established a Working Group on Early Years Accommodation Costs in Schools (herein referred to as "Working Group"). The Working Group was comprised of representatives from school boards, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs), and licensed early years service providers from across the province. The Working Group's mandate was to provide advice and recommendations to the ministry on early years accommodation cost transparency and methodology in schools, and best practices related to early years programs operating in schools.

The following document was developed in consultation with the Working Group and is envisioned to serve as a source of relevant information related to early years accommodation costs and agreements in schools.

The ministry encourages school boards, CMSMs and DSSABs, and early years service providers to review the guiding principles and key considerations for school-based early years programs, and further supports the development of integrated, efficient, transparent, and accessible approaches to costs for early years service providers operating in schools.

Responsibilities for School-Based Early Years Programs

CMSMs and DSSABs, and early years service providers work in partnership to deliver high quality and inclusive early years programs that are child and family centred and contribute to children's learning, development, and well-being. In keeping with the provincial government's schools-first approach, school boards also have a role to play in ensuring the success of programs that are located in schools.

The **Ministry of Education** sets the legislative, regulatory, policy, and funding framework for the early years, which includes the provision of capital and operating funding to CMSMs, DSSABs, and school boards to support their respective roles in the early years and education system.

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs) are designated service system managers for early years programs under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, responsible for the planning and managing of services at the local level, and have a duty to cooperate with school boards and other partners for the purpose of implementing service plans. All CMSMs and DSSABs receive funding from the Ministry of Education to support community planning processes which include representation from school boards, early years service providers, and other community partners. CMSMs and DSSABs have flexibility to determine how to allocate early years program funding to best meet the needs of children, families, and early years service providers within their community.

School boards are responsible under the *Education Act* for the provision of junior kindergarten to Grade 12 education and have a role to play in working with partners in enhancing student achievement and well-being, closing gaps in student achievement, and maintaining confidence in the province's publicly funded education systems. School boards identify appropriate staff (e.g., school board Early Years Lead, Principal, Community Outreach Coordinator, etc.) to support early years programs. In consultation with local CMSMs and DSSABs, school boards may identify sites and space for early years capital investments in some schools. As outlined in the *Education Act*, school boards are required to ensure delivery of extended day programs where there is sufficient demand, through direct delivery or partnership with an early years service provider, for all children from junior kindergarten through age 12. School boards are also responsible for facility management of their properties.

Early years service providers in schools may be non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, municipally operated or registered charities with a board of directors governance model, typically comprised of community members. Some school boards operate early years programs in schools. CMSMs and DSSABs may enter into service agreements with early years service providers for early years programs for children 0 to 12 years of age.

Guiding Principles for School-Based Early Years Programs

The school and early years programs are intended to complement one another, providing a seamless day for children and their families, embracing the following five overarching principles to early years accommodation costs in schools.

Access

Early years service providers should aim to offer accessible, affordable, high-quality, child-centred services. Early years accommodation costs should recognize costs to access year-round and extended day program services, where required and/or possible and feasible. Early years accommodation costs should be flexible to allow for localized needs, exceptional circumstances, and geographic variances while supporting regional equity, where possible. Working together, early years service providers, CMSMs and DSSABs, and school boards will seek to provide access to space where appropriate and as required. When identifying space for early years programs, consideration will be given to the age group being served, the purpose of the program using the space, and the ability to license the space.

Inclusion and Integration

Recognizing the ministry's schools-first approach, early years space should be seen as part of the school, inclusive in the school community and infrastructure. Where possible and appropriate, space should be shared between schools and early years programs. Integration should be encouraged between school boards and early years service providers to support the coordination of facility services and on-going operations, and to promote sharing of services where cost effective.

Efficiency

Early years accommodation cost models should be multi-year, flexible, and responsive to policy and program changes. Efficiency and effectiveness is achieved by sharing knowledge and best practices, expertise, and resources between schools and early years service providers.

Transparency

Early years accommodation costs should be fully transparent and disclose financial information in a timely and systematic manner using existing, available financial reporting mechanisms. Transparency, equity, participation, accountability, and integrity should guide the development of early years accommodation costs.

Alignment

Aligning early years accommodation costs with other government and sector-wide policies, guidelines, and initiatives will help to ensure effective approaches to facility costs. The Ministry of Education, school boards, CMSMs and DSSABs, and early years service providers should align goals of integrated service system planning and be open to sharing strategies for success.

School Facility Cost Recovery Model

School boards are encouraged to use the Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) developed model, or another similar mechanism, to provide evidence-based, transparent costs of occupying school buildings or premises for early years programs.

This model or another tool developed by a school board should be discussed and shared with the early years partners in advance of implementation. If another tool is used to determine the cost of using the space, the guiding principles for school-based early years programs in schools (page 5) should be observed. It is recommended that a school board-wide approach be used rather than a school-level approach. Furthermore, to assist with long-term planning, it is also beneficial for school boards to provide early years service providers with a multi-year horizon (e.g., a minimum of three to five years) for the cost of occupying school buildings or premises.

The Ministry of Education's *Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (2015)* established that school boards are not expected to take on additional costs to support facility partnerships. There are some school boards which, based on their local student achievement strategy, financially support some partnerships, including but not limited to early years programs. The *Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline* as well as this reference guide does not seek to alter these arrangements. However, when school boards seek to cover costs in the fees charged to early years service providers, fees should cover the operations and facility renewal costs, including administrative costs and property taxes (if applicable), to the school board of the space occupied by the early years service provider. Regardless of whether a school board financially supports early years programs operating in its schools, the school board should calculate its cost for the early years program occupying the school space in order to ensure transparency in the fees charged and expenses incurred.

Representatives from the OASBO, building on work from the 21st Century School Fund and the University of California-Berkeley's Center for Cities and Schools, developed a Community Use of Schools School Facility Cost Recovery Pricing Model (herein referred to as "the model") to support the determining of evidence-based lease rates that are transparent and accountable. The model uses individual school boards' data which considers direct and indirect costs that are associated with the use of space, using valid, reliable, and consistent data reported by school boards to the ministry. The rate generated illustrates the annual cost per square foot per year, and is customizable, using individual school boards' data and policies.

The model is currently used by a number of school boards to calculate the cost to the school board of using or sharing space in schools, for both early years service providers and other community groups. The rate determined by the model provides evidence to aid internal decision-making about the cost to use the space, and may be used as a starting point for early years partners in negotiating agreements.

The initial set-up for the model may be time consuming, and some time-lag exists. Additional information about the model is available within the 'Instructions' tab of the tool itself, which can be accessed at: [Limestone District School Board](#), and [Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board](#).

Questions for Reflection When Using the Model

- How does your school board's facilities-related decisions reflect the ministry's vision for the early years? How do your school board's decisions reflect its student achievement strategy?
- What type of early years space is being occupied (see page 8) and how does that impact the cost inputs used in a model?
- What multi-year horizon for the cost of occupying school buildings or premises is suitable given the school board's facilities-related decisions?
- How is your school board using a pricing model to support cost transparency for early years partners?

Types of Early Years Space in Schools

In order to operate an early years program in a school building or premises, be it licensed child care or an EarlyON Child and Family Centre, the early years service provider may have an agreement with the school board. This agreement provides a mechanism for defining and establishing the use of the space and costs (e.g., the early years program may have independent or shared entrance, hallways, washrooms, mechanical, HVAC, custodial, outdoor play space, etc.). There are five different types of early years spaces as identified by the Working Group. The type of space being occupied should be considered when determining the cost input figures which are used in the pricing model.

Dedicated Purpose-Built Space (i.e., purpose-built within or onto the school)

Space that was specifically built to accommodate an early years program within or onto the school.

Stand-Alone Structure (i.e., separate building/campus)

A separate building/campus that is physically separated from the school.

Dedicated Retrofitted Space (i.e., conversion of school space)

School space that was not required for student accommodation and has been retrofitted for an early years program.

Shared Space – Extended Day and Before and/or After School

School space that is used by an early years service provider to deliver before and/or after school child care program during instructional days.

Shared Space – Non-instructional Day

School space that is used to an early years service provider during non-instructional days (e.g., summer break, March break, professional development days, Saturday or Sunday).

Key Considerations When Working Together in Schools

Cooperative and collaborative relationships among staff at the school, early years service providers, and other community programs encourage consistency and continuity for children and families. Ongoing, clear communication is paramount in establishing and maintaining positive relationships between all partners working in schools. These considerations are reflected in the Guiding Principles outlined earlier in this document.

Many school boards, CMSMs and DSSABs, and early years service providers across the province have worked in partnership to establish policies or protocols to ensure effective practices when working together in schools. These practices recognize and value that educators from all programs are responsible for organizing and implementing their respective programs within the context of legislative and local policy requirements.

This section offers some key considerations from existing practices in schools on how leadership and staff from schools and early years programs can work together to create a welcoming environment and an integrated culture for children, families, and educators.

Communication Considerations

- Schedule and plan for regular leadership meetings throughout the year at the system level (e.g., between school boards, CMSMs and DSSABs, and early years service providers, where appropriate) to support and nurture a shared culture and to discuss shared opportunities, challenges and important updates that may impact each other's programs.
- Build and foster relationships through regular opportunities for staff from the school and early years programs to get to know each other and understand each other's work (e.g., joint invitations to school council meetings, early years service providers' board of directors meetings, invitations to joint professional learning opportunities, visiting each other's programs).
- Develop ongoing communication strategies to support staff sharing space (e.g., a communication book, an orientation checklist, advance notice of any scheduling changes) including a conflict management process that is clear to all.
- Develop a process for communication with casual or supply staff to ensure understanding of transition procedures between school and early years programs.
- Provide opportunities for shared information from school and early years programs to be posted in the school or in newsletters and websites.
- Establish a process to notify early years service providers in a timely manner if a program needs to be relocated to an alternate space for any reason. Relocation of early years programs should be minimized.

- Provide as much advanced notice as possible if an early years program is required to relocate from a school location (e.g., during the summer months or school holidays due to construction or maintenance work, due to a fire or a pupil accommodation review, etc.).
- Include early years partners, including CMSMs and DSSABs, in processes related to pupil accommodation reviews, where appropriate.

Health, Safety, and Security Considerations

- There are common and distinct health, safety, and security regulation and policies in the *Education Act* and *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. This includes, for example, emergency evacuation and inclement weather procedures, fire plans, etc. that need to be established and understood among staff at the school, early years programs, and other community programs.
- Review school board policies and procedures regarding access to schools in the event of school closures or other emergencies (e.g., access, keys, etc.).
- Establish alternate licensed space which may be available in schools, if needed. This includes developing procedures for cases where children in the regular day school may need access to licensed space occupied by an extended day program earlier or later than scheduled.

Logistical Considerations

- Determine room or space allocations based on the needs of the children attending the program. In cases where space is shared before and after school, if possible, the room selected should be used by the same age group during the school day to encourage a seamless day for children.
- Consider the development, renewal, and design of outdoor learning spaces in an intentional and thoughtful manner with input from children and families.
- Consider a handbook to guide and support all staff working in partnership in schools to serve children and families.
- For licensed child care programs, ensure primary and alternate spaces are licensed. When an early years service provider is required to relocate, work to support the relocation of the early years program to another suitable space.

For more considerations, please consult: *Child Care and Schools: Working Together in Shared Space (2017)*.

Glossary

Agreement refers to a contractual agreement by which one party conveys a cost in property to another party, for a period of time, subject to various conditions, in exchange for something of value, but still retains ownership. Other comparable terms include: lease agreement, license agreement, occupancy agreement, permit, and partnership agreement.

Before and/or after school programs refer to licensed child care before and/or after school for students aged 6 to 12.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres refers to the consolidation of the following ministry-funded programs: Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs), Child Care Resource Centres (CCRCs), and Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBFs). As part of Ontario's early years modernization plan, these four programs have been integrated and transformed to establish EarlyON centres. EarlyON centres serve children aged 0 to 6 years and can be accessed by children and caregivers at no cost.

Early years programs refers to licensed child care (including extended day programs) for children 0 to 12 years of age, and EarlyON centres for children aged 0 to 6 years. The Ministry of Education asks CMSMs and DSSABs and school boards to prioritize not-for-profit early years service providers for the purposes of funding and delivery of early years programs.

Early years service providers in schools refers to non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, municipally-operated or registered charities with a board of directors governance model, typically comprised of community members. Some school boards operate early years programs in schools. CMSMs and DSSABs may enter into service agreements with early years service providers for early years programs for children 0 to 12 years of age.

Extended day programs complement what happens during the regular school day in the full-day kindergarten program. Registered early childhood educators are responsible for the before and/or after school programs. As outlined in the *Education Act* and regulations, school boards are required to ensure delivery of extended day programs where there is sufficient demand through direct delivery or partnership with an early years service provider for all children from junior kindergarten through age 12. The majority of programs are offered through a third party service provider, and may be offered directly by a school board.

Facility renewal costs refer to costs for the maintenance (e.g., re-painting walls, refinishing flooring, brick and asphalt repair), repair and replacement of existing building systems (e.g., roofs, windows, doors, HVAC systems).

Appendix 1: Resources

A number of school boards and CMSMs and DSSABs have developed local policies, handbooks, resource manuals, and reference guides to support early years partnerships and accommodations in schools. Many of these documents can be found publicly on school board, and CMSM and DSSAB webpages.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education has policies, regulations, and supporting resources, including:

The **[Child Care and Early Years Act \(2014\)](#)** is legislation that regulates child care in Ontario. Regulations under this Act includes: child care licensing standards including age groupings, ratio group size, staff qualifications. Provisions regarding local service system planning and funding for early years programs are also set out in regulation. Regulations under this Act can be found at: [Ontario Regulation 137/2015: General](#), [Ontario Regulation 138/2015: Funding, Cost Sharing, Financial Assistance](#).

The **[Education Act](#)** and its regulations set out duties and responsibilities of the Minister of Education and the duties and responsibilities of school boards, school board supervisory officers, principals, teachers, parents, and students in the province of Ontario. [Ontario Regulation 221/11 Extended Day and Third Party Programs](#) outlines the regulations for before-and-after school programs for students in junior kindergarten to Grade 6. It also sets out requirements with regard to reporting and program content for before-and-after school programs and additional considerations to support the implementation of these programs. [Policies and Guidelines for School Boards: Before and After School Programs Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2017](#).

[Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline \(2015\)](#) is a guideline which assists school boards in establishing more facility partnerships, and to support effective planning with community partners. School boards are expected to revise or develop their own policy/policies that are consistent with these guidelines.

[Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework \(2017\)](#) sets a vision for a system in which all children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive, and affordable early years programs and services that are child and family centred and contribute to children's learning, development, and well-being.

[Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario \(2014\)](#) outlines the four key goals for education in the province of Ontario including: achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, and enhancing public confidence with plan of action to assess progress towards each goal.

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years \(2014\)](#) is a resource guide about learning through relationships for those working with young children and families. It articulates a view of children, families, and educators as competent and capable of complex thinking and is designed to support pedagogy and

program development in the early years. As set out in the Minister's policy statement issued in June 2015, all licensed child care programs are required to have a program statement that is consistent with this resource.

Putting How Does Learning Happen into Practice: Program Expectations for Licensed Child Care is an e-module intended to support child care programs in meeting the program requirements under the *Child Care Early Years Act, 2014*. It is divided into five segments with modules available in both English and French.

Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children (2013) is a compilation of research briefs that highlight key research findings related to seven elements of early years program quality from leading experts in the field of early childhood. Accompanying video segments are also available.

The new ***Child Care and Early Years Act: What Providers and Parents Need to Know Factsheet*** answers questions about key changes that will affect licensed and unlicensed child care providers in Ontario regarding the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

The ***Child Care Licensing Website*** is designed to support child care providers, licensees and early years professionals and anyone who is interested in learning more about provincial requirements for licensed child care centres. It provides an overview of Child Care Licensing System, *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* Licensing Standards, an interactive *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* self-test, resources, sample forms, helpful links, and more.

The ***Kindergarten Program (2016)*** provides the pedagogical approaches and program considerations for kindergarten in Ontario. Overall expectations are provided in the context of four frames: Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-Being, Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours, and Problem Solving and Innovating. ***Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum (2016)*** describes the policy for assessment, evaluation, and reporting for kindergarten and how relates it to the policy for Grades 1 to 12, as set out in *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010*.

The ***Before-and-After School Programs Kindergarten-Grade 6: Policies and Guidelines for School Boards (2017)*** summarizes the provisions set out in the *Education Act* and regulations for before-and-after school programs for students in kindergarten to Grade 6. It also sets out requirements with regard to reporting and program content for before-and-after school programs and additional considerations to support the implementation of these programs.

The ***Child Care and Schools: Working Together in Shared Space (2017)*** offers some key considerations from existing practices in schools on how leadership and staff from schools and early years programs can work together to create a welcoming environment and an integrated culture for children, families, and educators.

Appendix 2: Membership of the Working Group on Early Years Accommodation Costs in Schools

The Working Group on Early Years Accommodation Costs in Schools was comprised of members from the following school boards, service system managers, and early years service providers:

- Conseil scolaire public du Nord Est de l'Ontario
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
- Toronto District School Board
- Halton Catholic District School Board
- Rainbow District School Board
- Upper Grand District School Board
- York Catholic District School Board
- District School Board of Niagara
- City of Toronto
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
- District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board
- Regional Municipality of Peel
- Family Day
- Umbrella Child and Family Centres of Hamilton
- Centre éducatif rayon de soleil

The following individuals contributed to the Community Use of Schools School Facility Cost Recovery Pricing Model revisions:

- Charlyn Downie (Limestone District School Board)
- Brandt Zätterberg (Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board)