

Ministry of Education

Before and After School Programs Kindergarten – Grade 6

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR
SCHOOL BOARDS FOR THE
2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

COVID-19 OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

This section of the *Before and After School Kindergarten to Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines for School Boards* is intended to provide clarification and best practices to operate before and after school programs with enhanced health and safety guidelines and/or restrictions in place for the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19. This guidance document will be modified from time to time, as applicable, to reflect any updated or new advice.

All before and after school programs operated or contracted by the board should follow the health and safety requirements set out by the Ministry of Education for core-school program delivery as well as guidance provided by the school board and local public health unit. Advice of the local public health unit must be followed, even in the event that it conflicts with, or is inconsistent with, this guidance document.

For licensed child care operators, additional operational guidance is provided under O. Reg. 137/15 made under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and the Ministry of Education's document entitled [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening](#), as amended from time to time.

At this time, the Ministry of Education has provided direction that all before and after school programs may operate with pre-COVID-19 outbreak declaration ratios and maximum group size requirements beginning in September 2020.

The ministry has developed a new resource entitled [Building on How Does Learning Happen?](#) that provides pedagogical approaches to re-opening child care and early years settings, including before and after school programs. This resource shares ideas, reflective questions and lessons learned from emergency child care to help to support child care and early years settings as they work to provide healthy physical, social and emotional spaces for children and their families as they gradually re-open.

DUTY TO OPERATE BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Under the *Education Act*, school boards are required to ensure the provision of a before and after school program on every instructional day for every elementary school serving students in the primary and/or junior division where there is sufficient demand and/or viability. (See [DUTY: Provision of Before and After School Care](#) section of this document for more details.) Boards are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel for further guidance about this requirement when the current context requires additional time to ensure that before and after school programs are operational in September 2020.

DEMAND AND VIABILITY

[The PLANNING: Community Engagement](#) section of this document provides guidance on the integrated approach to the planning and delivery of before and after school programs and required consultation. There is flexibility for school boards, service system managers and community partners to work together to assess viability and demand and develop planning

processes that are responsive to the particular qualities and needs of a community.

This section also provides factors for consideration when assessing viability and demand.

Additional factors to consider for the reopening may include:

- Availability of qualified staff given enhanced health and safety requirements;
- Shared space considerations, including considering the availability of space on school premises; and ability to meet enhanced cleaning and disinfection requirements between the core day and before and after school program.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND GROUPS

The ministry recognizes that in order for before and after school programs to be operational and viable, it may not be possible to limit students in the before and after school program to their groups from the core day. The ministry recommends that, in circumstances where students from different school day classes must interact to participate in the before and after school program, boards make efforts to limit interactions between students from different classes to the greatest extent possible.

Best practices to limit interactions between students from different classes and reduce transmission of COVID-19 may include:

- Making best efforts to group the before and after school program class with the same core day class (e.g. determining core day classes based on whether the child is enrolled in the before and after school program); and
- Making use of large, well-ventilated spaces (e.g. gymnasium) or outdoor spaces as much as possible for the before and after school programs.

Before and after school programs are also required to follow strict health and safety guidelines, which are equivalent to those in schools.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

All before and after school programs operated or contracted by the board should follow the health and safety requirements set out by the Ministry of Education as well as guidance provided by the school board and local public health unit. School boards should work with providers to establish and coordinate protocols.

Licensed child care operators should also refer to O. Reg. 137/15 and the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening document](#) referred to above for additional health and safety protocols. Extended day programs and programs operated by an authorized recreational and skill building provider should also use the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening document](#) as a resource to support re-opening.

Cleaning and Disinfection

School boards are required to ensure that the classroom is cleaned and disinfected after the core day program ends and the before and after school program begins.

Providers may consider scheduling outdoor play during the time that the cleaning and disinfecting takes place.

Follow local public health unit advice regarding best practices for cleaning and disinfecting, including:

- which products to use;
- how to clean and disinfect toys;
- how to clean equipment; and,
- other items to remember, including checking expiry dates of cleaning and disinfectant products and following the manufacturer’s instructions.

It is recommended that operators keep a cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.

You may also refer to Public Health Ontario’s [Environmental Cleaning fact sheet](#) for more information on cleaning.

Guidance on the Use of Masks, Personal Protective Equipment and Handwashing

All staff and providers are required to wear medical masks and eye protection (e.g. face shield) while inside the before and after school programs, including hallways.

School-aged children in grade 4 and higher are required to wear non-medical or cloth masks indoors. The wearing of non-medical or cloth masks indoors is encouraged for younger school-aged children, particularly in common spaces (see information about the use of non-medical or cloth masks on the [provincial COVID-19 website](#) or the [Public Health Ontario factsheet on non-medical masks](#)). Parents/guardians are responsible for providing their school-aged child(ren) with a non-medical or cloth mask(s).

The use of masks is not required outdoors for adults or children if physical distancing of a least 2-metres can be maintained between individuals.

Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks are expected to be put in place by providers. Exceptions to wearing masks indoors could include circumstances where a physical distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained between individuals, situations where a child cannot tolerate wearing a mask, reasonable expectations for medical conditions, etc.

Providers should document their requirements and exceptions related to masks.

Before and after school program providers should secure and sustain an amount of PPE (including but not limited to face shields, medical masks, gloves, etc.), and cleaning supplies that can support their current and ongoing operations. The Ontario Together Portal has a [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) that lists Ontario businesses that provide personal protective equipment and other supplies.

When wearing a medical mask, you should wash your hands before putting on the mask and before and after removing the mask. Refer to [Public Health Ontario resources](#) for how to properly wear and take off masks and eye protection.

Perform and promote frequent, proper hand hygiene (including supervising or assisting participants with hand hygiene). Hand washing using soap and water is recommended over alcohol-based hand rub for children. Refer to Public Health Ontario's [How to Wash Your Hands fact sheet](#).

Communication with Families

Communication with families regarding the enhancement of health and safety measures facilitates transparency of expectations. New policies should be shared with families, for their information and to ensure they are aware of these expectations, including keeping children home when they are sick, which are aimed at helping to keep all children and staff/providers safe and healthy.

Providers must share with parents, the policies and procedures regarding health and safety protocols to COVID-19, including requirements and exceptions related to masks.

Additional Health and Safety Guidance

The following sections provide guidance and best practices for school boards to consider related to additional health and safety measures. School boards should work with providers to establish and coordinate protocols that align with school board policies and local public health unit advice.

Screening

- All individuals including children attending before and after school, staff, parents/guardians, and visitors must be screened each day before entering the program.
- An individual who has been screened for symptoms prior to the before school program would not need to be re-screened for the core day program. Similarly, an individual that has been screened prior to the before school program or core day program, would not need to be re-screened for the after school program.
- Where possible, daily screening should be done electronically (e.g., via online form, survey, or e-mail) prior to arrival. Additionally, protocols should be in place to allow for communication between school/core day and before and after school providers regarding screening.
- If students are screened at the school/program location, screeners should take appropriate precautions when screening and escorting students to the program, including maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from those being screened, or being separated by a physical barrier (such as a plexiglass barrier). If a 2 metre distance or a physical barrier is not available, PPE (i.e., medical mask and eye protection (i.e., face shield)) should be worn.
- Where an individual does not pass the screening and is not permitted to attend the program, this does not need to be reported to the local public health unit.
- Please follow advice from your local public health unit regarding precautions to have in place.
 - Refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) resources for how to properly wear and take off masks and eye protection.
- Alcohol-based hand rub containing 60% to 90% alcohol content should be placed at all

screening stations. Dispensers should not be in locations that can be accessed by young children.

- All before and after school program providers must maintain daily records of screening results.
- Records are to be kept on the premises.
- You may wish to consult the [Province's COVID-19 website](#) for information and resources on COVID-19 symptoms, protections, and seeking health care.

Pick up and Drop Off Procedures

- Develop procedures that support physical distancing and separate groups of students as best as possible (i.e., children of one room enter door A and children of another room enter door B, or staggered entrance times).
- As much as possible, parents should not go past the screening area.
- All entrances should have alcohol-based hand rub containing 60% to 90% alcohol content.
- Consider using signage/markings on the ground to direct families through the entry steps.
- Personal belongings (e.g., backpack, clothing, etc.) should be minimized. Belongings should be labeled and kept in the child's cubby/ designated area.
- If the before and after school program is located off school premises and transportation is being provided by the school board, the school board should work with the provider to explore transportation considerations using relevant health and safety protocols, including the recently released [guidance for student transportation](#).

Attendance Records

- Maintain daily records of anyone entering the space and the approximate length of their stay (such as cleaners, people doing maintenance work, people providing supports for children with special needs, those delivering food).
- Records (e.g. name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, screening completion/result, etc.) must be kept up-to-date and available to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

Protocols When Someone Demonstrates Symptoms of Illness

- A single, symptomatic, laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in a staff member or student should be considered a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak, in consultation with the local public health unit. Outbreaks should be declared in collaboration between the program and the local public health unit to ensure an outbreak number is provided.
- Students and staff who are symptomatic or have been advised to self-isolate by the local public health unit, should not attend the program. Asymptomatic individuals awaiting results may not need to be excluded and should follow the advice of the local public health unit.
 - Symptoms to look for include but are not limited to: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, headache, and a general feeling of being unwell.
 - Children in particular should be monitored for atypical symptoms and signs of COVID-19. For more information, please see the symptoms outlined in the 'COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms' on the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 website](#).

- If a student or staff becomes symptomatic while in the program, they should be isolated in a separate room and family members contacted for pick-up.
- If a separate room is not available, the person who is symptomatic should be kept at a minimum of 2 meters from others.
- The person who is symptomatic should be provided with tissues and reminded of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper disposal of tissues.
- If the person who is symptomatic is a student, a staff member should remain with the child until a parent/guardian arrives. If tolerated, the student should wear a medical mask. The staff member should wear a medical mask and eye protection (i.e., face shield) at all times and not interact with others. The staff member should also avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
- All items used by the person who is symptomatic should be cleaned and disinfected. All items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, cardboard puzzles) should be removed and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days.
- The local public health unit should be notified, and their advice should be followed.
- If the program is located in the school or a shared space setting (e.g. community centre), follow public health advice on notifying others using the space of the suspected illness.
- Other students, including siblings of the symptomatic student, and staff members in the program who were present while the child or staff member became symptomatic should be identified as a close contact and grouped together. The local public health unit will provide any further direction on testing and isolation of these close contacts.

Washrooms and Toileting

- Only one group should access the washroom at a time and it is recommended that the facilities be cleaned in between each use.

Space Set-Up and Physical Distancing

- The ministry recognizes that physical distancing between students in a before and after school program may be difficult and encourages staff and providers to maintain a welcoming and caring environment for children. Please see the document [*Building On How Does Learning Happen?*](#) For more support and ideas on how to provide an engaging environment while physically distancing.
- Each group of students should have their own assigned indoor space, separated from all other groups by a physical barrier. The purpose of the barrier is to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets that are thought to transmit COVID-19 and to reinforce physical distancing requirements between groups. The physical barrier should begin at the floor and reach a minimum height of 8 feet to ensure that it will always be 12 inches taller than the tallest person in the facility. It should be as wide as the space/room will allow.
- When in the same common space (e.g., entrances, hallways) physical distancing of at least 2 metres should be maintained between different groups and should be encouraged, where possible, between children within the same group by:
 - spreading children out into different areas, particularly at meal and dressing time;
 - incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children; and
 - using visual cues to promote physical distancing.

- In shared outdoor space, a distance of at least 2 metres must be maintained between groups and any other individuals outside of the group at all times.
- Personal protective equipment is not required during outdoor programming, unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Shared spaces and structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between groups should not be used.
- Additional suggestions include:
 - planning activities that do not involve shared objects or toys;
 - when possible, moving activities outside to allow for more space; and
 - avoiding singing activities indoors.

Equipment and Toy Usage and Restrictions

- Encouraged to provide toys and equipment which are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected (e.g., avoid plush toys).
- Encouraged to provide designated toys and equipment (e.g., balls, loose equipment) for each room or group of students. Where toys and equipment are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected prior to being shared, including between groups.
- If sensory materials (e.g., playdough, water, sand, etc.) are offered, they should be provided for single use (i.e. available to the child for the duration of the program) and labelled with student's name, if applicable.
- Play structures can only be used by one group of students at a time. Please consult with your local public health unit regarding the use of playground equipment onsite.

Outdoor Play

- Schedule outdoor play by groups in order to facilitate physical distancing. Where the outdoor play area is large enough to accommodate multiple groups, groups must remain separated by at least 2 metres.
- Personal protective equipment is not required during outdoor programming, unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- If play structures are to be used by more than one group, the structures can only be used by one group at a time and should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use by each group.
- Designated toys and equipment (e.g. balls, loose equipment) for each group is encouraged. Where toys and equipment are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected prior to being shared.
- Students should bring their own sunscreen where possible and it should not be shared. Staff may provide assistance to apply sunscreen to any child requiring it and should exercise proper hand hygiene when doing so (for example washing hands before and after application)

Food Provision

- Change meal practices to ensure there is no self-serve or sharing of food at meal times.
 - Utensils should be used to serve food.
 - Meals should be served in individual portions to the children.
 - There should be no items shared (i.e., serving spoon or salt shaker).
- There should be no food provided by the family/outside of the regular meal provision of

the program (except where required and special precautions for handling and serving the food must be put in place).

- Children should neither prepare nor provide food that will be shared with others.
- Ensure proper hand hygiene is practiced when staff are preparing food and for all individuals before and after eating.
- Where possible, children should practice physical distancing while eating.
- There should be no sharing of utensils.

COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS AND FEES

If school boards and community partners developed and completed a survey to parents and guardians for the 2020-21 school year prior to the release of these guidelines, the ministry would recommend surveying families again as parent/guardian circumstances may have changed.

Under O. Reg. 137/15, the following rules would apply to families whose children received child care at a licensed child care operated before and after school program immediately prior to the emergency closure period:

- If a placement is offered which would begin on or after September 1, 2020, parents must be given 14 days' notice to accept or decline the placement;
- Unless the parent declines the placement, the placement must remain available for the full 14-day period;
- Unless the parent accepts the placement, no fee or deposit can be charged or collected in respect of the placement during the 14-day period; and,
- Parents must not be penalized for using the full 14-day period to decide whether to accept or decline the placement.

In an effort to stabilize parent fees when re-opening, the ministry encourages before and after school program providers to set fees at the level they were at prior to the closure, where possible.

These requirements apply to licensed child care-operated before and after school programs. The ministry encourages all other before and after school programs to confirm with parents and guardians if a space is still needed as family circumstances may have changed.

As soon as reasonably possible, boards are required to provide the following information to parents and guardians in writing and post such information on the school board's website:

- The fees for before and after school programs
- The process and approach for determining sufficient demand and viability
- Schools that will and will not be offering a before and/or after school program
- Information on how to apply for financial assistance for before and after school programs
- Notice that if a third party program ceases to operate, the school board will ensure that another program will be available but the fees, days and times of operation may change.

REPORTING TO THE MINISTRY

School boards are required to report information on before and after school programs to the ministry each school year. The ministry will be providing further information on the reporting process shortly.

PREFACE

School boards are required to ensure the provision of before and after school programs (i.e. school board-operated and third party programs) in each elementary school in Ontario for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 where there is sufficient demand and/or viability.

School boards are required to comply with the provisions for before and after school programs set out under [Part IX.1 of the *Education Act*, Regulation 221/11 entitled “Extended Day and Third Party Programs,”](#) and policies set out in this document. Some provisions under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA) and regulations may also apply.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document 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.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGERS

Under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#), Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) are designated as service system managers responsible, at the local level, for the planning and management of early years services, including child care and child and family programs.

Service system managers, in partnership with families, service providers, school boards and community agencies, lead locally-based planning and development to support an integrated approach to child care and early years services that respond to the needs of the community.

The ability to strengthen the quality of child care and early years experiences and enhance system integration requires the strategic leadership of CMSM/DSSABs to initiate, sustain and monitor local planning and development to achieve Ontario’s vision for the early years.

Service system managers are required to develop Service System Plans in accordance with provincial requirements. Service planning should be done in the context of the full range of coordinated early years and child care services for children and families, including before and after school programs for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6.

SCHOOL BOARDS

School boards play a critical role in the child care and early years sector. They provide an environment where services can be co-located and integrated for the purpose of reducing transitions, building cohesion and alignment across early years pedagogy and stronger connections between children, families, and early years and school professionals and educators.

School board leadership is vital to supporting comprehensive and continuous education that supports children from birth to adulthood.

School boards include district school boards and school authorities as defined under the *Education Act*.

DUTY TO COOPERATE

Under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) service system managers are required to consult with school boards in the development of service plans. The [CCEYA](#) also states that the service system manager, school boards and other identified child care and early years partners shall cooperate with each other for the purpose of implementing the service plan.

For the past several years, service system managers and school boards have worked in partnership to assess and jointly submit school-based early years capital funding projects to the ministry. As part of this process, CMSMs/DSSABs and school boards work closely together to identify suitable early years capital projects that meet the eligibility, sustainability and priority requirements of the ministry, then jointly sign off on all proposals which are submitted for approval.

Through greater integration with early years, child care, and education services, more children will benefit from a seamless day and consistent quality of care that supports healthy child development, well-being and lifelong success.

1. DUTY: PROVISION OF BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

SCHOOLS SUBJECT TO THE DUTY

Requirement:

In accordance with section 2 of O. Reg. 221/11, school boards are required to ensure the provision of a before and after school program for every elementary school serving students in the primary and/or junior division (i.e. from Kindergarten to Grade 6) where there is sufficient demand and/or viability.

Programs must be available on every instructional school day.

A before and/or after school program may not be required if there is insufficient demand. Please see section 3 for more information.

Considerations:

Programs may operate on non-instructional days (e.g. professional development days, winter, spring and summer breaks) if there is a need required by families within the community.

ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS: SCHOOL BOARD-OPERATED OR THIRD PARTY

Requirement:

In accordance with the *Education Act* and regulation, school boards may directly operate before and after school programs or they may enter into an agreement with a third party that is either:

- A licensed child care centre that is eligible to receive fee subsidy payments for children

enrolled in the program; and/or

- An authorized recreational and skill building program for after-school programs

THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS

Considerations:

When selecting potential service providers, school boards are encouraged to work with their local service system managers to select third party operators that have the capacity to:

- deliver high quality before and after school programs
- collaborate and integrate services with community and school partners
- address the diverse needs of all children and families in the community

Where a school board is proposing to work with a licensed child care centre to meet the expanded duty and wishes to license space in the school to deliver the program, providers are encouraged to begin the licensing application process as early as possible to prevent delays.

School boards are not required to prioritize agreements with third party programs that are operated by a not-for-profit or a municipality. School boards will continue to have the authority to decide who to enter into agreements with for the purposes of meeting their duty. School boards may wish to continue to work with not-for-profit third party providers or enter into agreements with for-profit providers in order to best meet their local needs. This flexibility may assist school boards in meeting the various needs of child care in different communities across the province.

Although the prioritization of not-for-profit operators has been removed for child care funding, service system managers continue to have discretion about the providers with which they enter into purchase of service agreements. On-going communication and collaboration with the service system manager is essential.

ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL BOARD

Considerations:

In accordance with the Act and regulations, two or more school boards may enter into an agreement together for one of the school boards to directly operate or enter into an agreement with a third party to operate a before and/or after school program in a school of the board, for students of another school board.

2. PROGRAM FEES AND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

PARENT FEES: SCHOOL BOARD-OPERATED PROGRAMS (Extended Day)

Requirement:

In accordance with the *Education Act*, the *CCEYA* and their respective regulations, every school board shall charge fees to parents of students enrolled in school board-operated programs to recover costs incurred by the school board.

School boards are also required to ensure that costs associated with accommodating students

with special needs are incorporated into the cost of the program.

Considerations:

A school board may also require a deposit or a registration fee to be paid to enroll a student in a school board-operated program.

- Deposits cannot exceed fees charged by the school board for two weeks enrolment in a program.
- Where a parent withdraws an enrolled student before the first day of the program, school boards must refund deposits, less a maximum of \$50 for administrative fees.
- Registration fees cannot exceed \$50.

PARENT FEES: THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS

School boards do not determine third party fees as these are set by the provider. The ministry does not regulate child care fees set by licensed child care centres or recreation providers.

Ontario Regulation 137/15 prohibits child care centres from charging a waiting list fee or deposit to parents seeking to be added to or removed from a waiting list.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

The ministry provides funding to local service system managers who are responsible for the administration of child care fee subsidies in their communities. Child care subsidy is available for children enrolled in licensed child care, school board-operated before and/or after school programs, children enrolled in authorized recreational and skill building program, and for children enrolled in camps that meet criteria set out under the CCEYA and regulations.

Eligible families may apply for subsidy through their local service system manager. Fee subsidy for eligible families is subject to the availability of subsidy funds within the budget of the CMSM or DSSAB, the existing of a purchase of service agreement with the operator, as well as space being available within a child care program.

Local service system managers have the flexibility to determine how to allocate child care and early years funding to best meet the needs of children, families and service providers within their community. There may be instances where a before and after school program is not in receipt of fee subsidy even if it is eligible.

Service system managers may also choose to provide general operating funding to school board operated programs (extended day programs), as defined under the *Education Act*, to alleviate high fees to parents, consistent with service system managers' discretion to provide general operating funding to other child care programs.

Requirement:

Child care subsidies may only be provided through the local service system manager. School boards are not permitted to directly provide subsidies to families to access a before and/or after school program.

Considerations:

School boards may enter into agreements with a local service system manager to provide subsidies to eligible families with children enrolled in a school board-operated program. Local service system managers may administer child care subsidy based on local policies and priorities, in accordance with ministry regulations and policies, to best respond to the needs in their community.

3. PLANNING: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Requirement:

To support an integrated approach to the planning and delivery of before and after school programs, school boards are required to consult with the following community partners to determine demand and program viability (section 4 of O. Reg. 221/11):

- Service system manager(s) for the service areas of the school board
- Any First Nation that has a tuition agreement with the school board
- Operators of existing third-party programs selected by the school board (e.g. licensed child care programs and authorized recreation program providers)
- Parents with children who are enrolled/they intend to enroll in Kindergarten – Grade 6 with the school board
- Indigenous organizations that provide culturally appropriate programs and services to urban Indigenous communities

School boards are required to include information regarding the estimated daily fee and non-instruction fee for school board-operated and third party programs when assessing demand. School boards are also required to assess demand for non-instructional days.

WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS AS LOCAL PARTNERS

The Ministry of Education recognizes the value of culturally appropriate early years and child care programs for Indigenous communities, and is committed to working closely with partners to support a strong early years and child care system for Indigenous children and families.

Early Years and Child Care in Urban Indigenous Communities

The Ministry of Education provides funding to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) to support culturally appropriate programming through 61 off reserve Indigenous-led child care and early years projects. This programming is delivered by Indigenous-led organizations in partnership with CMSMs/DSSABs.

Indigenous Education Strategy

The Ministry of Education is committed to working with Indigenous and education partners to continue improving Indigenous student achievement and well-being in Ontario and increasing all students' knowledge and understanding of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, contributions and perspectives.

Ontario supports strategies for improving achievement among Indigenous students in provincially funded schools beginning in the early years and continuing through

postsecondary, training or workplace opportunities. In addition, the Ministry of Education is committed to raising awareness about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions among all students.

The government is committed to continuing to build positive relationships with Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners and working in a spirit of mutual respect through all interactions. Strong partnerships between the ministry, school boards, schools, educators, families, students, community organizations and Indigenous partners are essential.

Considerations:

District school boards should engage with their Indigenous Education Councils and with Indigenous organizations, such as their local Indigenous Friendship Centres, to support Indigenous students who may be accessing before and after school programs.

Working with Indigenous organizations will help the province meet its commitments to both reconciliation and its equity and inclusive education policy.

A CONSISTENT APPROACH FOR FAMILIES

Considerations:

As part of the consultative planning process, school boards must work with their local service system manager(s) and their community partners, including urban Indigenous organizations, to develop an approach on how to assess sufficient demand and viability. The regulatory framework provides flexibility for partners to work together to assess viability and demand and develop planning processes that are responsive to the particular qualities and needs of a community. Factors for consideration may include:

- Demand and/or gaps in services:
 - These gaps may include specific populations that face barriers to accessing programs and may require specific programming to accommodate their specific needs
 - Partners may wish to co-create community surveys and share existing information such as waitlist data for child care or enrolment data in schools
 - Interests identified by children and families in programming (programming content, hours of operation, provision of snacks)
- Capacity to expand and/or establishing program
 - Partners may identify existing service providers and their capacity to meet specific programming needs in the community (e.g. culturally responsive, newcomer programs)
 - Partners may consider the availability of qualified staff and/or service providers that are able to meet the programming requirements
 - School boards may take an inventory of existing programs offered in their schools that operate before and after school such as licensed child care centres, nutrition programs, and After-School Programs funded by the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport
- Parent Fees

- Programs should consider demand for both full-fee paying families and families that require subsidy to access programming
- Where demand is insufficient in the absence of subsidies, a program may not be viable
- School boards are encouraged to work with their local service system manager to support equitable access to before and after school programs for children

School boards and local service system managers are encouraged to share information to develop a common approach to assessing viability of programs and identify potential solutions at a community level.

School boards are encouraged to work through their local service system manager(s) to engage with existing third party providers.

CO-TERMINOUS SCHOOL BOARDS

Consideration:

School boards are encouraged to work with their co-terminous school boards to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of before and after school care for families across the community.

Please note: The regulatory requirement that each parent is surveyed every year has been removed from regulation (though school boards may continue to use the survey to inform planning discussions).

EXEMPTIONS FROM DUTY

Requirement:

A before and/or after school program may not be required for a school if there is agreement between the school board, the local service system manager and any First Nation with a tuition agreement relating to students attending that school that there is insufficient demand.

This assessment must be informed by the consultative process set out above, which includes engagement with urban Indigenous organizations, existing third party providers, and parents.

DETERMINATIONS

Requirement:

Based on the consultative process, school boards must determine:

- The schools in which the school board will offer before and after school programs in the next school year for students enrolled in Kindergarten to Grade 6 including:
 - the length of time the program will operate
 - the times in the day during which the before and after school portions of the program will operate
 - any non-instructional days on which the school board anticipates before and/or after school program will operate
 - the features the school board-operated program will include (e.g. provision of snack, homework help)
 - The daily fee and non-instructional daily fee for school board-operated program

Reporting requirements set out in section 9 below include an affirmation signed by the school board, relevant local service system manager(s) and First Nations indicating there is agreement that where a before and/or after school program is not offered, the school is exempt from the duty because it is not viable (e.g. there is insufficient demand). See section 9 for more information.

4. SCHOOL BOARD–OPERATED (EXTENDED DAY): PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

PRINCIPLES GUIDING PROGRAMMING

Requirement:

School board-operated programs complement what happens during the regular school day and are guided by [How Does Learning Happen?: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) (HDLH). Consistent with HDLH it is expected that school board-operated programs are guided by the following principles:

- *View of the Child:* All students are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. Environments and experiences allow students to exercise choice and responds to individual abilities and interests.
- *Positive Interactions:* Programs support students in making connections with their peers and staff in structured and unstructured interactions as well as provide opportunities for students to engage in independent activities. All students, including students with differing abilities feel valued, connected to others, and are able to make positive contributions to the group, community and natural world.
- *Developmentally Responsive:* All students are able to participate fully in ways that are most comfortable for them. Programs support physical and mental health and wellness, and are rooted in an understanding of child development and the broader contexts within which this development is happening (e.g. local, social, cultural, economic).
- *Safe, Inclusive Spaces:* Programs establish and maintain positive, harassment/discrimination free environments for optimal participant growth so that students, each with differing abilities, interests and perspectives feel that their experiences and strength are valued.

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) provides a comprehensive framework to guide program development and pedagogy in early years settings and support Ontario's vision of high quality programs and services centered on the child and family with a view of children as competent and capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential.

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) helps move Ontario towards increasingly integrated programs and services for children and families whether in child care, child and family programs, or Kindergarten, with a shared view of the child, common pedagogical approaches and foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression that are aligned with the Kindergarten program.

STAFFING RATIOS

Requirement:

- The maximum allowable child to adult staffing ratio for a school board-operated program shall be 15:1.
- Where a program unit size exceeds a child to adult ratio of 15:1, the school board shall appoint another staff person to that program unit.
- Each group of children shall not exceed a maximum size of 30 students (this maximum size does not refer to the total number of children served by a program. There may be multiple groups of children, in separate areas, served by one program).

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND ADULT SUPERVISION

Requirement:

As set out under Part IX.1 of the *Education Act*, school board-operated programs must have at least one Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) to lead the program unit.

For programs only serving children 9 years of age or older, there must be at least one adult to lead the program unit who meets one of the following criteria:

- Has a diploma or degree in child and youth care;
- Has a diploma or degree in recreation and leisure services;
- Is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers; or
- Is a member in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators

Programs must have adult supervision on-site at all times. Additionally, where a program is the sole occupant of the premises, there must be a minimum of two adults onsite at all times.

Considerations:

Programs may wish to exceed the minimum ratio and staffing requirements. Research suggests that smaller group sizes support more meaningful and positive interactions between children. This may also permit greater capacity to support children with higher levels of need.

ACTIVE PLAY

Requirement

School board-operated programs are required to offer a minimum of 30 minutes of active play in daily programming to provide opportunities for increased physical activity for children and youth. Activities should be developmentally appropriate and accommodate fitness levels and interests of students. Emphasis should be on participation and enjoyment and can include introducing participants to a range of developmentally appropriate physical activities such as sports, dance, free gym time, and active games.

This requirement aligns with the [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines](#) recommending 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity for children aged 5-17. It is also consistent with the principles outlined in [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), which include creating opportunities for children to engage in active play that allow them to connect with the natural world and their community.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Considerations:

[*How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*](#) notes that children thrive where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Considerations:

School boards may wish to offer specific programming based on the needs and interests of the community and participants in the program. This programming can include:

- Unstructured time to allow children to develop interests, engage with their peers, play independently, and make choices and decisions for themselves
- Academic assistance or time for students to complete school work
- Arts and cultural activities that promote inclusion, knowledge of other cultures, or creative pursuits
- Personal health and wellness education (e.g. anti-bullying, body image, fostering resilience)
- Community involvement
- Providing snacks for students participating in the program. All food should meet recommendations set out in [Canada's Food Guide](#).

DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE SPACES

Considerations:

Programs should ensure spaces are clean and in a good state of repair. Environments should be inviting and designed together with students based on their abilities and interests, allowing for a variety of activities that are responsive to individual development. Spaces should allow for both independent and small group experiences.

Furnishings and materials should support a range of interests that provide for learning, creative expression, recreational activities, and relaxation.

5. AUTHORIZED RECREATIONAL/SKILL BUILDING PROGRAMS

Where a school board chooses to enter into an agreement with a provider to deliver an authorized recreational and skill building program, the school board must ensure that the following programming requirements set out below are included in the agreement between the school board and the recreation program provider.

AUTHORIZED RECREATIONAL AND SKILL BUILDING PROGRAMS

For after school programs that serve kindergarten students or higher, school boards may enter into an agreement with an authorized recreational and skill building program.

Authorized recreational and skill building program providers include municipalities, the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, and Ontario's After School Program funded by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Two new providers/operators have been added to the list of authorized recreational and skill building programs exemption under section 3.1 of Ontario Regulation 137/15. Programs that are recognized by Parks and Recreation Ontario as a HIGH FIVE© accredited organization and programs that are operated by a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres are permitted to deliver authorized recreational and skill building programs.

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014

As set out under sub[section 6\(4\) of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*](#) and its [General Regulation, Authorized Recreational and Skill Building Programs](#) may operate on weekdays for no more than one period of **up to 3 consecutive hours** of care each day for children aged 4 (or if the child care is provided on or after September 1 in a calendar year, the child will attain the age of 4 in that year) and up if they are not operated at a person's home and are:

- Operated by the local service system manager, a municipality, a school board, a First Nation or the Métis Nation of Ontario;
- Operated by a member of the YMCA or by a member of Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada;
- An Ontario After-School Program funded by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS);
- Operated by an organization that is recognized by Parks and Recreation Ontario as a HIGH FIVE accredited organization;
- Operated by a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres;
- Operated by a member of a provincial sport organization or multi-sport organization recognized by MTCS, where the program's activities are related to the sport or sports promoted by the organization;
- Operated by an MTCS agency or attraction (e.g. ROM, Ontario Science Centre); or
- Authorized by the local service system manager or a First Nation to offer child care, provided that the program supports the health, safety and well-being of children.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Research suggests that key factors in quality after-school programs include staff qualifications, small group sizes, more adults per child to encourage increased and meaningful interaction, and a variety of activities that stem from self-directed programming.

Principles Guiding Programming

Requirement

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs should be consistent with [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#).

- *View of the Child:* All students are competent and capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. Programming allows students to exercise choice and responds to individual interests.

- *Positive Interactions:* Programs support students in making connections with their peers and staff in structured and unstructured interactions, and provide opportunities for students to engage in independent activities. All Students, including students with differing abilities, feel valued, connected to others, and are able to make positive contributions to the group, community and natural world.
- *Developmentally Responsive:* All students are able to participate fully in ways that are most comfortable for them. Programs support physical and mental health and wellness, and are rooted in an understanding of child development and the broader contexts within which this development is happening (e.g. local, social, cultural, economic).
- *Safe, Inclusive Spaces:* Programs establish and maintain positive, harassment/discrimination free environments for optimal participant growth so that students, each with differing abilities, interests and perspectives feel that their experiences and strengths are valued.

Staffing Ratios

Requirement:

Authorized recreational and skill building programs must have a minimum of one staff person for every 15 students (1:15). Where the number of students exceeds 15, a second staff person is required.

Each group of children shall not exceed a maximum size of 30 students. Note that this does not refer to the total number of children served by a program. There may be multiple groups of children, in separate areas, served by one program.

Staff Qualifications and Supervision

Requirement:

Each program must have access to at least one adult to lead the program who meets one of the following criteria:

- Is a member in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators; or
- Is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers; or
- Has a diploma or degree in child and youth care; or
- Has a diploma or degree in recreation and leisure services; or
- Has a diploma or degree in social work, psychology, sociology, kinesiology with a focus/experience working with children aged 4 (or if the child care is provided on or after September 1 in a calendar year, the child will attain the age of 4 in that year) to 12 years old.

Programs must have adult supervision on-site at all times and at least one adult must meet the requirements above or be enrolled as a student in the fields identified above.

Additionally, where a program is the sole occupant of the premises, there must be a minimum of two adults on-site at all times

Active Play

Requirement:

After-school programs must offer a minimum of 30 minutes of active play in daily programming. Activities should be developmentally appropriate and accommodate fitness levels and interests of students. Emphasis should focus on participation and enjoyment and can include introducing participants to a range of developmentally appropriate physical activities such as sports, dance, free gym time, and active games.

This requirement aligns with the [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines](#) recommending 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity for children aged 5-17. It is also consistent with the principles outlined in [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), which include creating opportunities for children to engage in active play that allow them to connect with the natural world and their community.

Outdoor Play

Considerations:

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) notes that children thrive where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

Optional Activities and Programs

Considerations:

School boards may encourage recreation providers to offer specific programming based on the needs and interests of the community and participants in the program. This programming can include:

- Unstructured time to allow children to develop interests, engage with their peers, play independently, and make choices and decisions for themselves
- Academic assistance or time for students to complete school work
- Arts and cultural activities that promote inclusion, knowledge of other cultures, or creative pursuits
- Personal health and wellness education (e.g. anti-bullying, body image, fostering resilience)
- Community involvement
- Providing snacks for students participating in the program. All food should meet [new Canada's Food Guide, updated and released to the public in January 2019](#).

Developmentally Responsive Spaces

Considerations:

Programs should ensure spaces are clean and in a good state of repair. Environments should be inviting and designed together with students based on their abilities and interests, allowing for a variety of activities that are responsive to individual development. Spaces should allow for both independent and small group experiences.

Furnishings and materials should support a range of interests that provide for learning, creative expression, recreational activities, and relaxation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Requirement:

Where a school board chooses to enter into an agreement with an authorized recreational and skill building program for the provision of after-school programs for kindergarten students or older, the agreements must require that the operator meet the following conditions:

Policies and Procedures

Requirement:

Authorized recreational and skill building programs must have the following policies in place at each site and reviewed annually with all staff:

- An emergency action plan communicated with the school and visibly posted
- Accident and injury reporting
- Plans for children with medical or special needs
- Safety policies to monitor equipment and facilities
- Reducing risk of and responding to exposure to anaphylactic causative agents
- Safe arrival and departure procedures for children, particularly with regard to transitions after the school day (see below)
- Safe food handling with a minimum of one staff person that has been certified in a licensed safe food handling course
- Vulnerable sector screening for all staff prior to interacting with children
- The provision of healthy and nutritious food and drink for students (if the program provides snacks)
- Ensuring protection of privacy of children, youth and their families

Safe Arrival/Dismissal Policy

Requirement:

At a minimum, this policy should include a:

- Daily sign-in/sign-out procedure so that staff are aware of which children are in attendance and which are absent
- Procedure to be followed if a child does not attend and staff have not been notified in advance of the reason (e.g. contact school/parent if child has not arrived by a certain time)
- Process by which parents must inform the program in writing of who is or is not allowed to pick up their children
- Process by which parents must provide written consent for children of any age to sign themselves in and out
- Process by which the authorized recreational and skill building provider communicates with the school to support transitions to after the school day

Standard First Aid and CPR

Requirement:

All staff must be certified in Standard First Aid / CPR from a Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) recognized agency.

Vulnerable Sector Checks

Requirement:

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs are required to obtain vulnerable sector checks (VSCs) from all staff, volunteers, and students before they interact with children.

For any person, other than an employee, volunteer or student, who provides services to a child in the program, the program must obtain an offence declaration from the person or an attestation from their employer that a vulnerable sector check has been obtained and reviewed.

Vulnerable sector checks should be renewed every five years and offence declarations should be completed annually except in the year when a vulnerable sector check is obtained.

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs are required to have a policy in place to ensure that persons in contact with children in their programs are appropriately screened or supervised.

ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Professional Learning and Development

Requirement:

Authorized recreational programs must have a staff training plan that ensures orientation, as well as initial and ongoing staff education. A staff training plan must include:

- Yearly after school/organizational orientation where the staff sign off on the organization's policies and procedures
- Training in occupational health and safety (WHMIS)
- Training in ways to encourage positive interactions and communication among peers and support students' self-regulation abilities; and training on prohibited adult practices (i.e. using harsh or degrading measures withholding physical activity as a form of punishment)
- Training in conflict resolution
- Training in Standard First Aid and CPR certificate from a WSIB recognized agency (i.e. Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance)
- Training in healthy child development (e.g. High Five's "Principles of Healthy Child Development")
- Training on the role of healthy eating for the development of healthy behaviours and one staff at each location must be trained in safe food handling
- Training in adapting physical activity opportunities to include children and youth at all levels of athletic ability and those with physical, sensory or intellectual disability

- Training and familiarity with resources on integrating physical activity throughout the program

Liability Insurance

Requirement:

A current certificate of Comprehensive General Liability for at least \$2 million naming “Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario, Her Ministers, Agents, Appointees and Employees” as additionally insured.

6. LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES

Licensed child care centres are regulated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. Under the Act and its regulations, centres must meet a number of provincial standards including:

- Maximum group size and ratios for staff and children in care
- Staff qualifications
- Policies and procedures to support health, safety and wellbeing of children in care.

These regulations also require that licensed child care centres are guided by [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) in the development of their programming for children. Consistent with [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), licensed child care centres offering before and after school care are required to provide a minimum of 30 minutes of outdoor time each day in their programming.

7. THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS: LINKAGES TO THE SCHOOL DAY

TRANSITIONS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY

Requirement:

Agreements must include how third party programs and schools ensure the safe arrival and departure of children enrolled in third party programs as they transition between the school day, before and after school programs, and home.

Considerations:

Children have differing experiences and connections with their school. It is important that school boards and providers are considering transition requirements that support the individual needs of children in the program. A child may have an individualized education plan where specific supports may be required to transition children from the school day to before and/or after school programming. At the discretion of the board, a transition plan may also be developed for students who receive special education programs and/or services but do not have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and have not been identified as exceptional.

Individualized transition plans that reflect a student’s strengths and needs provide the foundation for successful transitional experiences that support the building of student resiliency. Articulating student transition needs can also be a valuable component of

developing an individual student profile.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Requirement:

In accordance with section 28 of O. Reg. 221/11, agreements must include that operators of third party programs must ensure that when its employees or contractors become aware that a student of the school board may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion must be considered, that these staff or contractors report the matter to the school's principal.

PROGRAMS OFFERED OFF SCHOOL PREMISES

Considerations:

School boards may choose to offer programs off school premises through a third party provider. For example, an after-school program for 4 -12 year olds may be offered at a municipal community centre where the space may be more developmentally appropriate for the children. Although this is permissible, school boards should ensure that appropriate transitions (including transportation to the location, where applicable) are provided to support the safety and well-being of all children.

This is intended to recognize existing partnerships between school boards and municipalities and service providers to serve children and better integrate existing services to support local planning, particularly for after school recreation programs.

8. COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS

See COVID-19 Operational Guidance section for more information about communication to parents for the 2020-21 school year.

9. REPORTING TO THE MINISTRY

See COVID-19 Operational Guidance section for information regarding reporting for the 2020-21 school year.