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## MEMORANDUM

February 14, 2023  
Regular Board Meeting

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**TO** Board of Trustees

**FROM** Shauna Boyce, Superintendent

**ORIGINATOR** Dr. Meg Miskolzie, Associate Superintendent, Student Supports and Services

**RESOURCE** Christine Ross, Division Principal, Wellness and Community Partnerships

**GOVERNANCE POLICY** Board Policy 2: Role of the Board  
Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent

**ADDITIONAL REFERENCE** BP 2: Section 1. Education Planning and Programming  
BP 2: Section 5. Supports and Services

**SUBJECT** **EARLY LEARNING REPORT**

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### PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

### BACKGROUND

The Board of Trustees reviews and approves the annual educational goals for Parkland School Division and provides a continuum of supports and services to students. The Early Learning Report is in support of these responsibilities.

### REPORT SUMMARY

The Early Learning Assurance Report highlights areas of focus in Early Childhood Services (ECS) in the Division. Supports and Services available to students in Early Learning and Kindergarten programs are reviewed, as well as areas of focus and future directions.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

MM:kz



# EARLY LEARNING REPORT

February 2023

Presented to the Board of Trustees, February 14, 2023  
 Dr. Meg Miskolzie, Associate Superintendent, Student Supports and Services  
 Resources: Christine Ross, Division Principal, Wellness and Community Partnerships

*Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.*

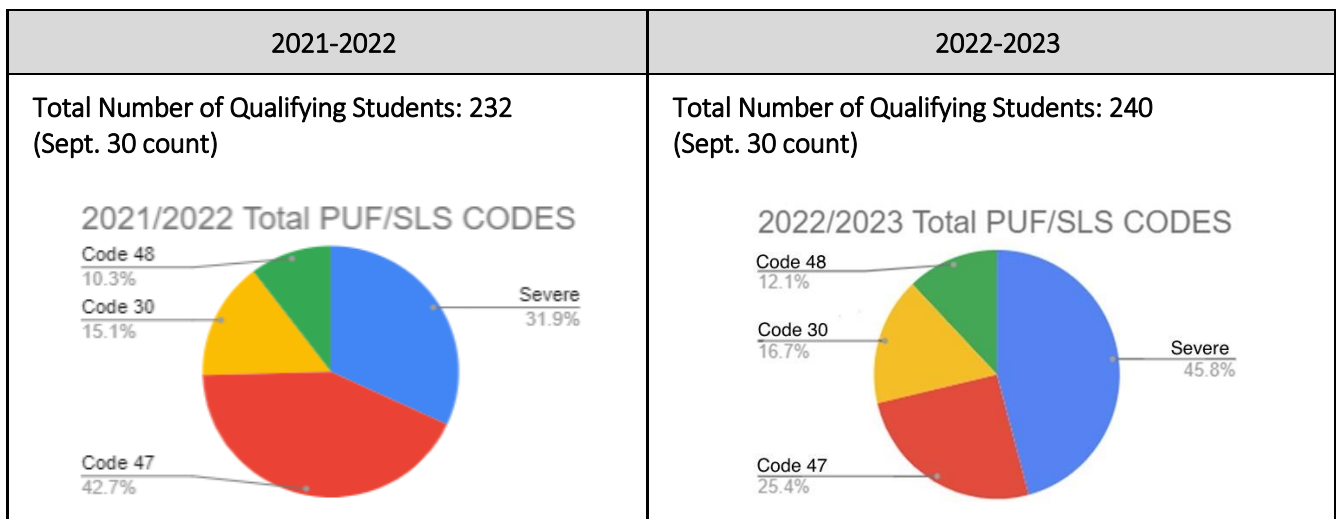
## BACKGROUND

**Early Childhood Services (ECS)** refers to the broad, coordinated system of local and provincial programs that meet the developmental and special education needs of young children and their families. In ECS programs, young children participate as active learners, build a shared set of experiences and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for subsequent learning. ECS programs refer to both kindergarten and early education programs. In broader definitions the World Health Organization defines early childhood from birth to 8 years of age.

**Preschool** aged children with identified needs are served in an **Early Education (EE) program** by the school authority accessing Program Unit Funding (PUF). To be eligible for a maximum of two years of PUF, children must enter EE at minimum 2 years 8 months and less than 4 years 8 months of age. Children who are 2 years 8 months to 3 years 7 months require a minimum of 300 hours and children who are 3 years 8 months to 4 years 7 months require a minimum of 400 hours to meet the requirements for PUF. Programming is guided by *Flight*; Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Curriculum framework and an Individualized Education Plan specific to the child’s identified areas of need.

**Kindergarten (K)** refers specifically to the education program for children in the year prior to Grade 1. The kindergarten program is an important part of ECS. Children with identified needs in Kindergarten are eligible for services by accessing the SLS (Student Learner Support) Grant. Programming and reporting is guided by the Alberta Education *Kindergarten Program Statement* and Individualized Education Plans.

## 2022-2023 Early Learning Overview



\*See coding descriptors on bottom of page 2

In their first six years, children develop the physical, emotional and social abilities that will be with them for life. The quality of a child’s earliest environment and exposure to appropriate experiences at the right stages of development forms the foundation for the course of their life path.

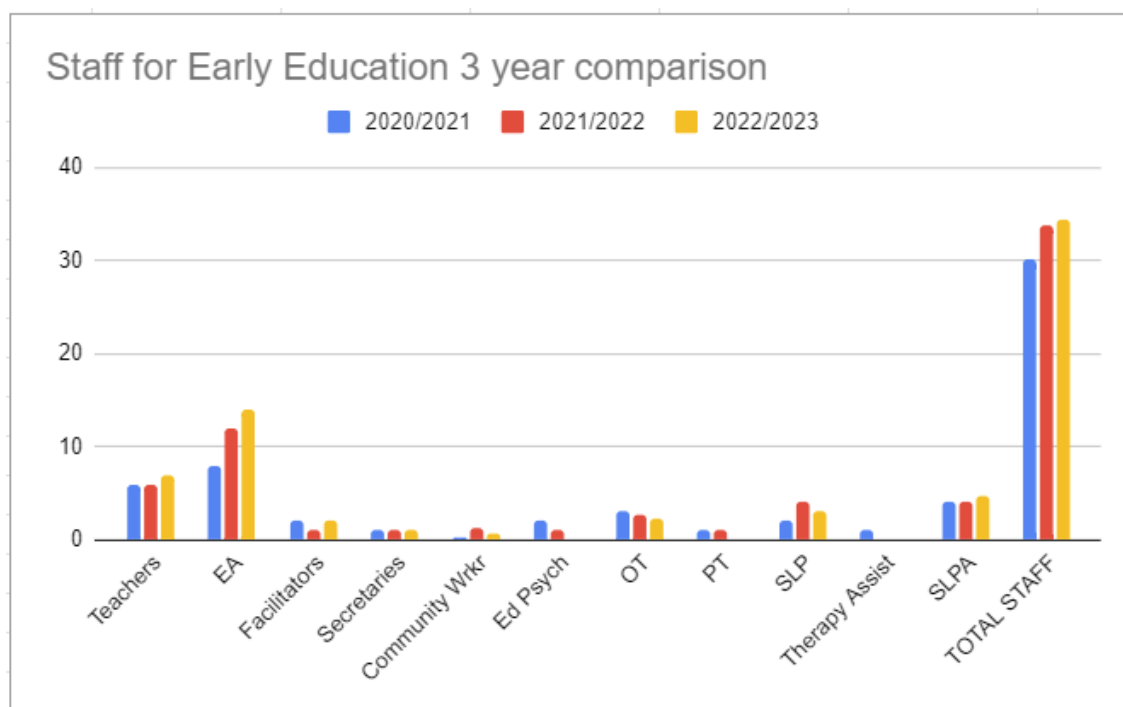
Our numbers of children with severe codes has increased by 13.9% this school year, in particular the number of students with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In the 2021-22 school year 30 children were identified with ASD in Early Education and 11 students were identified in Kindergarten. In the 2022-23 school year, 45 children have been identified with ASD in Early Education and 27 students have been identified in Kindergarten.

2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Number of EE Classes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 13</li> </ul>	<b>Number of EE Classes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 14</li> </ul>
<b>Locations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brookwood – 4 Classes</li> <li>● École Broxton Park – 5 Classes</li> <li>● High Park – 2 Classes</li> <li>● Stony Plain Central – 2 Classes</li> </ul>	<b>Locations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brookwood – 4 Classes</li> <li>● École Broxton Park – 6 Classes</li> <li>● High Park – 2 Classes</li> <li>● Stony Plain Central – 2 Classes</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Teachers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6.5</li> </ul> <b>Number of Facilitators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1</li> </ul>	<b>Number of Teachers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7</li> </ul> <b>Number of Facilitators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Support Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 28</li> </ul>	<b>Number of Support Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 30</li> </ul>
<b>Total Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● \$2,824,700</li> </ul>	<b>Total Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● \$2,919,639</li> </ul>
<b>Revenues from AB ED for Early Education (per child) for 2021-22:</b> <i>*Using Weighted Moving Average (WMA), with the exception of student identified as code 48</i> <b>Program Unit Funding (PUF):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Base: Mild/Moderate (30): \$3,032</li> <li>● Severe (41-46): \$15,000</li> <li>● Severe Language (47): \$10,000 <i>(10% of code 47 students funded at the same rate as other severe codes)</i></li> <li>● Moderate Language (48): \$4,000</li> </ul>	<b>Revenues from AB ED for Early Education (per child) for 2022-23:</b> <i>*Using Weighted Moving Average (WMA), with the exception of student identified as code 48</i> <b>Program Unit Funding (PUF):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Base: Mild/Moderate (30): \$3,062.32 (1% increase)</li> <li>● Severe (41-46): \$15,000</li> <li>● Severe Language (47): \$10,000 <i>(10% of code 47 students funded at the same rate as other severe codes)</i></li> <li>● Moderate Language (48): \$4,000</li> </ul>
<b>Revenues from AB ED for Kindergarten (per child) for 2021-22:</b> <i>*Used Weighted Moving Average (WMA), with the exception of student identified as code 48</i> <b>Specialized Learning Support Grant (SLS):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Base: Mild/Moderate (30): \$3,032</li> <li>● Severe (41-46): \$15,000</li> <li>● Severe Language (47): \$10,000 <i>(10% of code 47 students funded at the same rate as other severe codes)</i></li> <li>● Moderate Language (48): \$4,000</li> </ul>	<b>Revenues from AB ED for Kindergarten (per child) for 2022-23:</b> <i>*Used Weighted Moving Average (WMA), with the exception of student identified as code 48</i> <b>Specialized Learning Support Grant (SLS):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Base: Mild/Moderate (30): \$3,062.32 (1% increase)</li> <li>● Severe (41-46): \$15,000</li> <li>● Severe Language (47): \$10,000 <i>(10% of code 47 students funded at the same rate as other severe codes)</i></li> <li>● Moderate Language (48): \$4,000</li> </ul>

## Funding

- For the 2022-2023 school year, students who are eligible under Alberta Education’s Special Education Criteria, are funded in the following ways:
  - Early Education (preschool) - funded through PUF
  - Kindergarten - funded through the Student Learner Support (SLS) grant
  - Jordan’s Principle applications to support individual FNMI students who live on federal land
- PSD continues to offer *Play Partners* as an option for Early Education students who are not eligible for Alberta Education funding, where space and resources allow. *Play Partners* allows for high quality, inclusive programming for children in the community who do not have identified special education needs, and as an added benefit are language models for our students with identified speech needs. There is currently no criteria or selection process required for *Play Partners*, as children access the EE program for a fee.

## Early Learning Staffing



Supporting children with severe disabilities and their families is a team effort; we have cultivated a comprehensive continuum of supports and services. **This team includes:**

- Classroom teachers
- Educational assistants (EAs)
- Speech language pathologists (SLPs)
- Speech-language assistants (SLPAs)
- Occupational therapists (OTs)
- Community support worker
- Early Learning Facilitators

Contracted Supports:

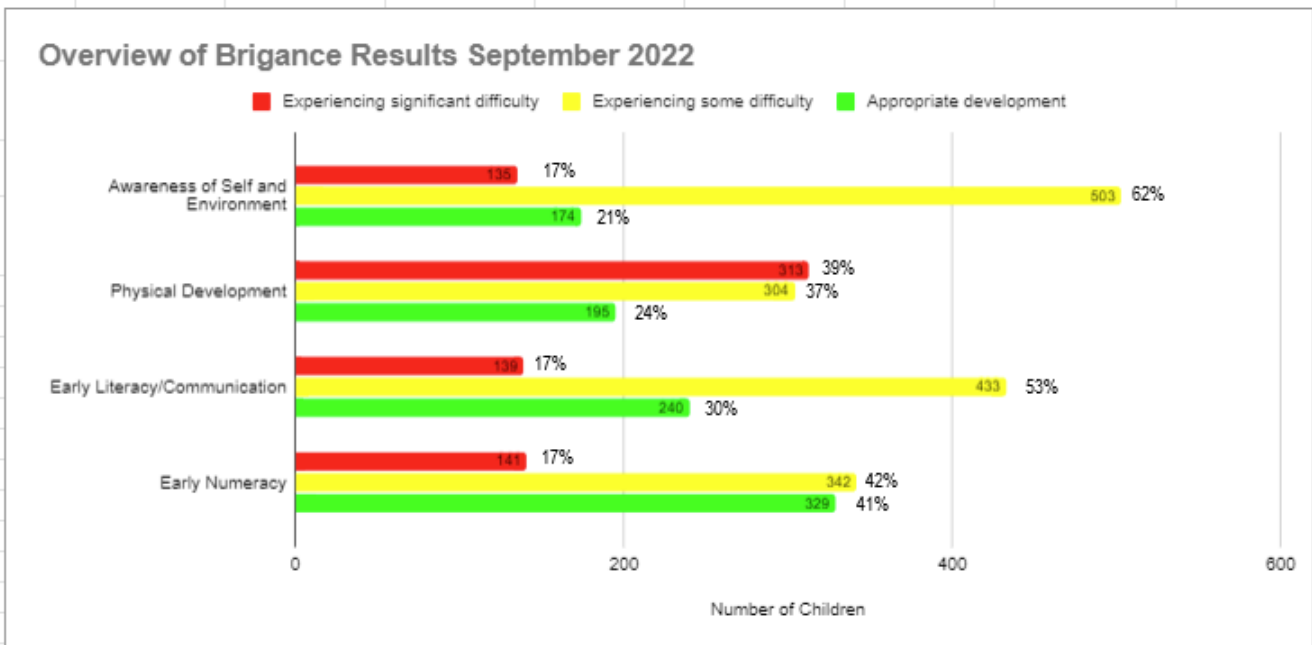
- Physical Therapy
- Educational Psychologist
- Blind/Low Vision
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Additional SLP time for assessments

Key Staffing/Contract shifts:

- We have added a 1.0 ECS Facilitator to support the complexities of children with severe needs.
- We are contracting Physical Therapy, Educational Psychologists and some Speech/Language Services. We appreciate the flexibility of contracted supports in providing direct therapies to children.
- With the additional ECS Facilitator and increased Educational Psychology time (roughly 1.5 FTE equivalent) we reduced the Community Support Worker position from .8 to .6 FTE.
- We have provided schools with additional allocations per student to provide a high level of support to those students with significant medical and behavioural needs.

**Assessment and Screening**

This year we transitioned from the **Early Years Evaluation (EYE) developmental screening tool** to the **Brigance III developmental screening tool**. The Brigance tool is better aligned with the Kindergarten report card and provides entry level literacy and numeracy information to inform programming. Because this tool is used to inform programming and identify students earlier we were able to refer to the broader Kindergarten support team for services earlier. The tool itself takes about 15 minutes to administer per student and is much quicker for teachers to administer and report on. Previously the EYE replaced the first term report card. With the Brigance screen identifying students' entry points in September a first term report card was administered in Kindergarten. Additionally, from a financial perspective, the EYE tool costs \$17,000/year and the Brigance tool costs less than \$500/year.



**Data-Driven Decision Making:**

- We are noticing a delay in student's physical development, specifically in the area of gross motor skills, in Kindergarten age students. The past 3 years this age group has been affected by many restricted opportunities due to COVID; for example: limited swimming lesson opportunities, public park closures, and families choosing to keep their children home. These impacts on gross motor development have translated into the classroom, which in turn have impacted fine motor development and Physical Education skills.
- By using this time saving screening tool we were able to identify students who may have developmental needs earlier in the school year. These students were referred earlier for specialized assessments and services.

## Additional Areas of Focus

**Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning in ECS**

This year in ECS we have addressed the divisional priority of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning by embedding Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning into the ECS environment. These include:

- In consultation with the Indigenous Education Facilitator we purchased a variety of Indigenous picture books for Early Education classrooms.
- Elder Tanya Daschavich from Treaty 8 Territory shared a link to some Indigenous drumming to use as a calming strategy which also supports a trauma sensitive classroom and is a lovely way to expose children to Indigenous Ways. The beat of the drum mimics a mother's heartbeat, which is found to be calming.
- Metis Elder MaryAnn Stepien and Elder Kokum Violet had story time with children. One EE teacher shared she couldn't believe how still and engaged her children were while Kokum Violet read to them.
- Several classrooms made bannock. Making bannock was a lovely communication opportunity around following steps with visual cues and sensory activity kneading the dough. It is important for all children to see themselves in the materials in the classroom.
- To support this effort, we have purchased Indigenous dolls (in addition to dolls of several ethnicities) for each classroom.
- Dr. Lillian Gadwa-Crier and Angelin Crier led a Professional Learning activity with staff in January focused on Moss Bag teachings.

**PUF/SLS Verification Process (Audit):**

Alberta Education reviews PUF/SLS submissions in depth to ensure students meet the criteria for funding for first year registrations. Submissions are due to Alberta Education in January of each school year.

- In the 2022-2023 school year, Alberta Education reviewed first year registrations for students that PSD had identified as being eligible for PUF/SLS funding. In addition, they sampled 20% of PSD's December 1, 2022 PUF registrations for codes 41, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47 and 100% of PUF registrations for codes 42 and 48.
  - Reviewing 20% of files was anticipated as this has been an ongoing practice for several years; however, an additional audit requirement in 2022-2023 was adding 100% sampling of PUF submissions for codes 42 and 48.
  - In the 2021-2022 school year 24 files were requested for verification and this year we submitted 52 files due to the increased audit requirements. This was a 6-week process for the ECS team to complete.

## Moving Forward

- The Early Learning team will continue to explore community preschool options to partner with to serve 3 and 4 year old children with identified needs in their community preschools for next year. This school year we have successfully piloted this approach with one preschool and daycare.
- In order to target student needs identified within the Brigance Screening Tool, Professional Learning opportunities and lessons for Kindergarten and EE teachers are being prepared in the area of gross motor development.
- In response to our increase in students identified with severe coding (including ASD) we are ensuring staff have opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge in supporting students with these needs. Some ways we have been supporting this is:
  - A PD session for Early Education and Kindergarten teachers was held in Fall of 2022 around supporting self-regulation in the classroom environment for individuals with ASD and social emotional challenges by an Educational Psychologist.
  - Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display (PODD) Training occurred in January. PODD is a low-tech visual communication system to support children with severe disabilities with profiles of low communication and ASD. Moving forward, support will be required to implement this new learning within our classrooms.