The Early Learning Program (ELP) represents a new direction for childcare and the education of four and five year old children in the province of Ontario. As with any significant change, many considerations, questions and concerns surface. This question and answer document is meant to provide preliminary information about the Early Learning Program. We will continue to communicate and update information as the implementation of this program unfolds in the Sudbury Catholic Schools.

What is the Ontario Early Learning Program?
The Early Learning Program is a combination of childcare and full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. It is designed to improve education for young children and increase supports for young families. In the Early Learning program, kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators will work together to help children learn during the regular school day. Schools will also offer programs before and after regular school hours (where there is sufficient enrolment) led by early childhood educators. There will be a reasonable fee for the childcare component of these programs and subsidies will be available for some families, based on financial need.

How will these changes benefit young children?
Many four- and five-year-old children already spend long days in a mix of childcare and kindergarten. This new approach to early learning offers children a more consistent, seamless day within enriched learning environments designed to help them develop the foundational social, emotional, academic and physical skills necessary to succeed in school and in life.

What will an Early Learning Program look like? How will it be different than the Kindergarten programs offered now?
The Early Learning program has two basic components:

a. Core Component: This component will be offered during instructional hours each school day (e.g., 9:00 to 3:30). In each classroom an educator team of one certified kindergarten teacher and one early childhood educator (ECE registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators) will work side by side to deliver the program.

b. Extended Day Component: This component will be offered before and after school (e.g., 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.). A student’s participation in this component of the Early Learning Program is at the option of parents and guardians, but boards must offer the program where there is sufficient enrolment to make a program viable. This component of the program is led by ECEs. It will be funded through parent fees set on a cost-recovery basis. Subsidies will be available for families who need help with the cost.

c. The Early Learning Program will be offered during the school year only.

d. Please see the attached chart for a comparison between an ELP and our existing Kindergarten program model.
How much will it cost to enrol a child in the extended program?
The regular school day portion of the full-day early learning program for four- and five-year-olds will be part of Ontario’s publicly funded school system. There will be no cost for this part of a child’s day. If a parent chooses to enrol their child in the extended day program offered before and after regular school hours, they will pay a fee set on a cost-recovery basis. The fees will be determined in consultation with the Ministries of Education, Child and Youth Services and district school boards.

Will transportation be provided for the extended day component of the Early Learning Program?
No. If a child is enrolled in the extended day component of the Early Learning Program, parents will be required to drop off and pick up their child at school just as if they were dropping off and picking up their child at a childcare provider. For children attending the Core Component only school bus transportation will be provided to Kindergarten children as per the Sudbury Catholic District School Board’s transportation policy.

Is full-day early learning mandatory for four- and five-year-olds?
No. The early learning program, like kindergarten, will remain optional for four- and five-year-olds. In Ontario, children will optional for four- and five-year-olds. In Ontario, children are required to attend school once they turn six years.

Does a child have to attend the extended day program?
No. The extended day program is optional.

If a school is selected as an Early Learning Program site, will all Kindergarten classes in the school participate?
Yes, all JK/SK classes in an ELP school will be part of the program.

If a school is selected as an Early Learning Program site, can a parent opt to send their child to school half time instead of full time?
Although enrolment of children in Kindergarten is optional for parents and guardians, once a child is enrolled in Kindergarten at an Early Learning Program site, it is expected their child will attend the core component all day every day.

What about after-school care for older children?
Parents will continue to make the choices they have always made about their childcare arrangements. Childcare operators will continue to offer service based on community and parental need.

How many children will be in an Early Learning Program classroom?
The class size standard for the ELP will be a board-wide average of 26 students, which will provide an average child-adult ratio of 13:1. Kindergarten classes that are not designated within the Early Learning Program will continue to be subject to the existing primary class size standards, which provide an average child-adult ratio of 20:1.

When will full day learning be available?
We will begin phasing in full-day learning in September 2010. The Sudbury Catholic District School Board will receive funding to offer full-day learning to an estimated 104 JK/SK students in the 2010/11 school year (Phase One of the implementation process). The Ministry of Education’s goal is to have the Early Learning Program for four- and five-year-olds fully implemented in all schools throughout the province by 2015-16.
Will my school be offering the Early Learning Program in September 2010?
Throughout the province, school boards, in consultation with coterminous boards, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, District Social Services Administration Boards and local Best Start Networks were asked to recommend schools that would benefit from the initial implementation of the Early Learning Program to the Ministry of Education. The recommendations were required to meet the following stringent guidelines:

a. Availability of space – it is important to understand that there is no capital funding available to school boards during phase one for renovations or additions to existing schools. Therefore the Early Learning Program can only be considered for schools where there is empty classroom space available.

b. Community need

c. Minimal impact on existing child care and early years programs

d. Student achievement

Based on these criteria and consultations, the Sudbury Catholic District School Board staff submitted a list of recommended schools to the Ministry for approval. The final selection of schools was made by the Ministry of Education, not by the trustees of the SCDSB. The Ministry has approved has the following schools: St Anne, Pius XII, and St Raphael to offer the Early Learning Program during the 2010/11 school year.

How will children be enrolled in the full-day early learning program?
Registration for all our Kindergarten programs within Sudbury Catholic Schools took place during January 2010 and is on-going. Parents will enrol their child within their attendance area. If their school is offering an Early Learning Program in September 2010, parents will be asked to indicate if they are interested in the child care component of the program. In ELP schools, the extended day component (childcare) will be offered where there is sufficient enrolment to make the program viable.

If a parent wishes to have their child participate (or not participate) in an Early Learning Program, will they be able to request enrolment in a school offering or not offering ELP?
No. The Sudbury Catholic District Board’s Out-of-Area Policy outlines the criteria for which parents are granted permission to send their child to a school outside their child’s normal attendance area. This criterion does not include requests for out-of-area attendance based on desired program. The Policy will be adhered to throughout the implementation of the Early Learning Program.

Currently in Ontario, the Ministry of Education governs education services through the Education Act while the Ministry of Child and Youth Services governs childcare services through the Day Nurseries Act. Under which ministry and act will the Early Learning Program fall?
It is anticipated that legislative changes to the Education Act will occur to allow school boards to govern the Early Learning Program. We do not know what these changes are or when they are expected to take effect.
## Comparison of the Early Learning Program and the current SCDSB Kindergarten Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Current SCDSB Kindergarten Model</th>
<th>New Early Learning Program Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>90% of primary classes are 20:1 or less</td>
<td>Board-wide average of 26 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program is Taught By</td>
<td>One teacher (registered with the College of Teachers)</td>
<td>One teacher (registered with the College of Teachers) and one early childhood educator (registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult: Child Ratio</td>
<td>20:1 to a maximum of 23:1</td>
<td>16:1 board average of 26:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Full day alternate day or Half day every day * starting in Sept 2010, there will be full-day J.K. and S.K. in all schools</td>
<td>Full day every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Program</td>
<td>Program operates during the regular school year (September to June)</td>
<td>Program operates during the regular school year (September to June)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before &amp; After School Care</td>
<td>Not available through the school board.</td>
<td>Will be offered through the school board where there is sufficient enrolment to make a program viable.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>