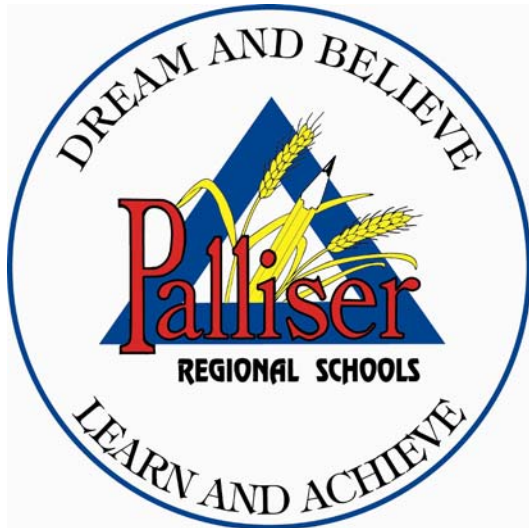
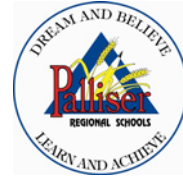


Palliser Regional Schools



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Palliser Regional Schools

Early Learning

Together we will ensure learning success for all students to develop their unique potential as caring citizens in a changing world.



Dear Parents:

Welcome to Palliser Regional Schools' Early Learning program. The following philosophy and policies are presented for your information and assistance.

At Palliser Regional Schools our preschool staff are carefully selected and screened. Early Learning staff who work in privately run facilities require their Level 1 Child Care Certificate, due to licensing requirements. In Palliser-operated Early Learning programs, having a Level 1 Certificate is an asset but is not a requirement. Staff members have First Aid Training and all have had Criminal Record Checks. There is ongoing professional development offered to all the staff in Palliser Schools and to the staff working with our Private Operated Programs.

We know that working as a team with your involvement and input will create be a safe and caring environment for your child and that he/she will grow and learn in our play-based environment. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the teacher.

Philosophy

Early childhood is a significant period in human development. Independence, initiative, decision making, creativity, the ability to learn, the ability to relate to others, and feelings of self-worth all have their beginnings in early childhood. What young children learn at this stage will have a major impact on successful learning experiences in school, on personal development and future participation in society.

Young children are naturally curious and eager to learn. Purposeful play is an important mode of learning for children. Through organized activities and purposeful play, children explore and experiment with their environment. The preschool program provides concrete, first-hand experiences with a variety of materials and people to help build a solid foundation for later abstract thinking in a safe and secure environment. The goal of the preschool experience is to provide learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate to meet the diverse needs of children and promote a positive attitude to lifelong learning.



Family-Centered Principles

Palliser Regional Schools recognizes the importance of the family as a partner in the educational team. Within the context of caring and responsibility, Palliser Regional Schools strives to implement the following family-centred principles:

1. Support and supplement the ability of families to fulfil their essential roles and responsibilities in the education of their children.
2. Demonstrate respect for and understanding of the diversity of family life and family needs.
3. Respect that family members have legitimate interest in the decisions which are made on their behalf.
4. Interact in a positive and pro-active manner with families.
5. Act as a resource for families regarding community agency supports to ensure children and students have access to the services they need.
6. Protect the privacy of families by maintaining confidentiality.



Parent Role on Your Child's Learning Team (continued)*

- ◆ Being consulted before your child receives specialized assessment and programming services or supports.
- ◆ Receiving reports on your child's progress at regular intervals during the school year
- ◆ Providing your written authorization for any additional services your child might need
- ◆ Being consulted on and giving informed written consent to your child's individualized program plan (IPP)
- ◆ Questioning decisions that you do not think will best serve your child's learning needs and working with the team to find a better solution



*Excerpt from page 10 of *The Learning Team—A Handbook for Parents of Children with Special Needs*, Alberta Education, 2003.

Principles

The following ten principles, adapted from the Alberta Education kindergarten program statement, provide a framework for our early learning program:

- 1) Childhoods differ depending on social and cultural circumstances.
- 2) Children's development is influenced but not determined by their early experiences.
- 3) Children interact and learn in a variety of contexts.
- 4) Children are co-constructors of knowledge and partners in learning.
- 5) Children are unique and active contributors to their learning.
- 6) Children construct and represent knowledge in a variety of ways.
- 7) Children are citizens and active participants in school and society.
- 8) Children are active collaborators in and users of assessment.
- 9) Children may require specialized programming and supports to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for later learning.
- 10) Children and their families may need coordinated family services to meet their needs.

For complete information please visit: <http://education.alberta.ca/media/312892/kingergarten.pdf>

Guiding Behaviour

At the preschool level, the focus is on the development of positive personal and social management skills necessary for effective learning. Children begin to learn about themselves as the basis for healthy interactions with others. In preschool, the goal is to assist the children in developing friendship skills and have opportunities to demonstrate caring behaviours and make a contribution to others. Children will be redirected to express their feelings in socially acceptable ways and to show respect and a positive, caring attitude toward others. Specifically, children will be supported in a kind and caring manner to:

- Develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards others;
- Accept and practice responsibility;
- Demonstrate and practice independence;
- Experience and express feelings in socially appropriate ways;
- Demonstrate awareness of qualities that contribute to positive relationships with family and with friends;
- Develop positive relationships with others; and
- Contribute to group activities in a cooperative manner.

Program Approach

Palliser preschool programs are play based. This philosophy is based on best practices for preschool children. Play is the work of young children—the way in which they learn most easily and naturally, the way in which they come to understand how the world works and to gain a sense of how to control their environment. Through the provision of our stimulating and nurturing play environment, your child will learn to explore, investigate, discuss and problem solve. Each child is unique and will have abilities that are different from those of other children. The dignity and self-worth of every child will be respected and enhanced. You will find a variety of centres in the preschool, and as your child plays at each centre, he/she will be developing social skills, language skills, and articulation skills. He/she will also be developing reading readiness skills, and gross and fine motor skills. Through their play at the centres, children will be encouraged to express their creativity and to develop intellectually and emotionally.

The philosophy of Alberta Education and Palliser Regional Schools is one of equality, sharing, participation, and the worth and dignity of individuals. As such, students with special needs are full participants in our programs. In the preschool you will find developing children playing and learning alongside children who have mild, moderate or severe needs. In the classroom, working with the preschool educator, are learning assistants, who support the unique learning needs of those children with learning difficulties.

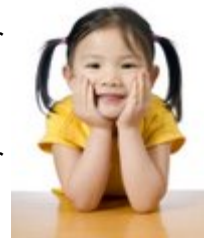
Palliser Regional Schools also partners with health and other professionals to plan cooperatively for the unique needs of some children. You may see in the classroom an occupational or physical therapist, a speech-language pathologist, a psychologist or a behaviour specialist. Children who have delays in any of the above areas will have a support team established which involves the parents, teachers and appropriate team members. The team reviews the needs and develops an individualized program plan (IPP).



Parent Role on Your Child's Learning Team*

Being an informed and contributing member of your child's learning team means:

- ◆ Participating in decisions that affect your child's education
- ◆ Giving your written and informed consent for any specialized assessments
- ◆ Being fully informed of the school's and division's programs
- ◆ Providing relevant information that could affect your child's learning and behaviour at school
- ◆ Receiving information on your child's learning and growth from teachers, principals and other district staff
- ◆ Having access to information in your child's school files, including results of specialized assessments and reports



Concerns and Appeals

If you have any concerns about the program, please let us know.

STEP I Ask for a meeting with the preschool educator, or the Kindergarten teacher. At that meeting, you should present your reasons for calling the meeting and state the action you wish taken. Usually we can solve most problems that affect your child at school.

STEP II If you are unable to reach an agreement a meeting with the School Principal would be facilitated. The Principal may request the Coordinating Principal of Early Learning to attend.

The above steps are referred to as the “local appeal procedure.” If your concerns are not solved at this point, the Associate Superintendent for Inclusive Education may be brought in to clarify the issue and arrive at a course of action..

STEP II If you are still concerned, you should call the Associate Superintendent for Inclusive Education and follow the same procedure, presenting your concerns and stating the action you wish taken.

STEP III The next stage is to request a hearing by the Board of Trustees.

STEP IV If the above steps have failed, you may write to the Minister of Education for a review of the Board of Trustees’ position.

The Board of Trustees for Palliser Regional Division No. 26 recognizes that parents have a right of appeal regarding decisions made by employees of the Board. Such appeals should be forwarded, in writing, to the attention of the Superintendent of Schools, clearly specifying the reason for the appeal. Upon receipt of the appeal, the Superintendent of Schools will establish a date for a meeting of the Appeal Committee of the Board, and notify the appellant of the date of the hearing, as well as their rights during the appeal process. The Appeal Committee will hear all arguments and information presented by or on behalf of the appellant, and by or on behalf of the school jurisdiction, after which a decision will be rendered and communicated to the appellant without delay.

Individual Program Plan

Each student identified as having a special education need must have an individual program plan (IPP). An IPP is a written commitment of intent by an educational team to ensure appropriate planning and implementation of learning goals, to document learning progress and to identify transitions plans. Parents are vitally important members of their child’s education learning team. We need parents and encourage you to contribute to the development and ongoing review of your child’s individual program plan. When completed, parents should receive a copy of their child’s IPP. Please retain it for reference and bring it with you to school meetings.

Parent Involvement

Parents are the first teachers of their children. Parent involvement is necessary and crucial to ensure quality programming. It is beneficial to parents to learn what goes on in the classroom and how it relates to their own children. We would like to create an open-door policy, meaning you are welcome to drop in anytime to observe your children. You may also be invited to participate in special and/or snack days.

A monthly newsletter provides ongoing information and updates to all parents. Parents are encouraged to express any concerns and to indicate if they feel that their child may need some learning support. Please address any concerns to the preschool educator in your program. She will contact the Coordinating Principal of Early Learning, who will help you to access support for your child. Specialized assessments may be completed, with parent consent, and the results of these assessments will be shared with you. We can then assist you to access the programs and services you will need to help your child both at home and at school. Parents are part of all decision-making.

Transition Plans

Moving a student from one level to the next—from preschool to kindergarten—is called transition. We will make every effort to ensure smooth transitions by planning with you. Your child will have an opportunity to visit kindergarten, and for most children, that is sufficient. If you or the preschool staff believe your child may require more support with this transition, we will be happy to make additional accommodations to ensure your child’s success and comfort.

Roles

The following Palliser staff are available to provide support to your child and your family.

1. **COORDINATING PRINCIPAL FOR EARLY LEARNING** has overall responsibility for programming for educational services required by children and students with special needs early learning programs and Kindergartens. She receives the initial requests recommending educational programming for preschool children who have been identified with special needs. Then facilitates referrals to the appropriate health care professionals, with the parents and relevant others, development and implementation of individual program plans (IPP's).
2. **SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR** - provides leadership, direction and support for inclusive educational practices within the school community. The administrator is key in fostering an attitude of acceptance and understanding for each child in the school. He/she also ensures that all policies and procedures recommended are followed as directed by the *Alberta School Act*, the *Child Care Act* and the policies of Palliser Regional Schools.
3. **LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER** - is the member of the school's Intervention team who can provide individual standardized assessments and support the learning needs of preschool children through individual and small group interventions. He/she is responsible for developing, coordinating and monitoring the IPPs for those children who have severe learning needs. The learning support teacher is also the key professional who can support the classroom teacher in the development of IPPs for children who have mild and moderate learning needs.
4. **PRESCHOOL EDUCATOR**—Preschool educators, under the direction of the Early Intervention Specialist, have the responsibility to plan and implement a play-based program that will meet the developmental needs of young learners.
5. **LEARNING ASSISTANT**—The learning assistant is an integral member of the educational team. The learning assistant's specific responsibilities will be identified, by the Early Intervention Specialist with specific responsibilities to meet children's needs.
6. **FAMILY SCHOOL LIAISON COUNSELLOR**- The family school liaison counsellors have the primary responsibility for delivering the

Roles (continued)

personal/social component of a comprehensive school guidance and counselling program. When personal/social needs are identified, the family school liaison counsellor becomes an integral member of the child's school-based team. Family school liaison counsellors provide a variety of service supports to meet children's needs in the personal/social domain.

Communication

Each day when you drop off or pick up your child you will have an opportunity to talk informally to the staff. If you find that you need more time, please let us know and we will arrange a meeting time and date.

We provide parent workshops (free of charge) to all parents through Triple P Parenting. Topics in the past have been behaviour, coping with stress, home safety, power of positive parenting, bedtime problems, sharing, tantrums, separation anxiety, communication and motor skills development. If you wish to suggest another topic, or would like a topic presented please talk to the preschool educator.

