

Background

The Division supports kindergarten as outlined by Alberta Education that address the learning needs of children before they enter grade one. Kindergarten programming in the province of Alberta is in guided by the curriculum established by Alberta Education. Parent registration of children in a kindergarten program is voluntary. The programming for kindergarten, whether half day or full day/alternating days, will provide children with approximately 475 hours of instruction during a school year.

Definition

Alternate day kindergarten refers to programming that is offered for a full school day typically every second day or on an established schedule equating to 5 full days every two weeks. This is not to be confused with some school divisions who offer full day, every day kindergarten.

Procedures

1. Parents interested in their school pursuing alternate day kindergarten must bring the concept to their school council and garner support of the school council before a principal will begin the process described below.
2. Principals that are considering a move to a full day, alternate day kindergarten will need to first contact their Area Director to discuss this as a consideration for the upcoming school year.
3. The principal will walk through the reasons for wanting to move to full day kindergarten with the Area Director, as well as discuss some of the benefits, challenges and implications for their parents and children (refer to Appendix A).
4. School administration must arrange for public consultation with parents who have children in their catchment who are zero to four years old. Public consultation includes sharing information with potential parents about the local reasons for considering alternate day kindergarten and asking their opinion of the proposed change. Advertising for the consultation must extend to parents of 0-4 years old. A public meeting hosted by school administration in person or virtually is required. There may be additional ways that a school wants to reach out to the community and should discuss that with the Area Director.
5. A survey will be used to capture parent voices in addition to concerns/questions raised during the public meeting or other consultation methods as approved. This needs to have been completed by February 1 of the year that the change is to happen (i.e., in February for a September alternate day kindergarten implementation). The survey must include at minimum:
 - 5.1 A clear outline the reasons for making the switch to full day alternate day kindergarten and provide both the benefits and challenges.
 - 5.2 Collect demographic information about the respondent including the number of and the age of their preschool child/ren.
 - 5.3 A 5-point Likert scale that asks if they are in favour of this change, and if this change will have a significant impact on their daycare and/or work arrangements.
 - 5.4 Provide respondents with the principal's name, email and phone number to contact to discuss further or ask questions.

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6. Results of the consultation must indicate that at least 65% of those who responded are in favor of the change. The number of respondents must be collected and clearly stated.
 7. The principal shall write a formal report highlighting the process undertaken to collect feedback and the survey results to the Superintendent of Schools by end of February. As it an ongoing calendar change, the final decision is made by the Board of Trustees typically by the end of March.
 8. With Superintendent approval, plans can begin for alternate day kindergarten, ensuring that the Human Resources and Transportation departments are part of the implementation planning as soon as possible.
 9. Should parents or school administration desire to change to half-day kindergarten, the same consultation process is required to change from full day to half day kindergarten.

APPENDIX A: Benefits and Challenges to consider

- Little performance data available to compare long terms impacts of half day vs. full day alternating days kindergarten programming.
- Students can fully engage in play and activities in multiple ways through the day as they have a longer time block.
- Students with long bus rides do not have to ride as many times per week with full day alternate day kindergarten.
- With full day alternate day kindergarten, some students may be more ready for grade one as soon as grade one starts rather than needing to adjust to being a school for full days over the first few weeks of the school year.
- With alternate day kindergarten, for some students it means one less transition during the day – home to school to daycare to home may change to home to school to home.
- With full day alternate day kindergarten, it can be easier on parents for childcare, drop off and pick up – less disruptions to the workday.
- Some students may not be ready for a full day of engaged learning until later in the year, making the day very long for them.
- The attention span of 5-year-olds can be very short.
- Full day alternate day kindergarten may be tempting to deviate from the curriculum and spend more time than required on academic tasks.
- For some children who have been at home until kindergarten, there may be some separation anxiety being away all day from caregivers.
- In French immersion going to a full day every other day kindergarten could cause a number of days in a row without exposure to French (considering long weekends, PL days etc.). With full day alternate day kindergarten, there is a lack of daily school day exposure to French.

Please remember that this is a long-term commitment, this is not a one-year pilot.