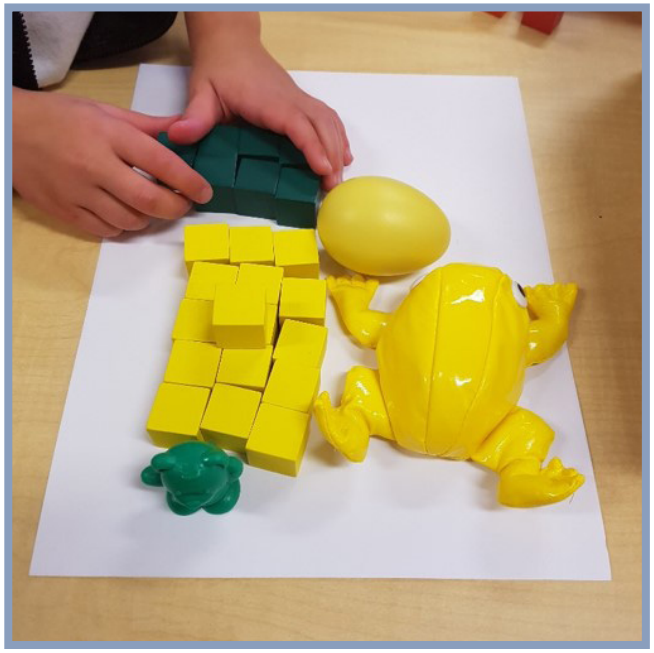
Strait
Regional Centre for Education

Pre-primary Program:

Information Handbook

Welcome to Pre-primary

Strait
Regional Centre for Education



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Pre-primary Program Overview
The Pre-primary Program is a child-centered, play-based program for children the year before they start school. This opportunity will help them transition into the school system and provide experiences that give children the best start to succeed in school and in life. Research shows that there is a critical link between a child's early experiences and later success in life.

The Pre-primary Program is a play-based program that supports young children's development. Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) work to create a rich environment in which children can explore and learn about themselves, each other, and the world around them.

Program Hours and Contact
Pre-primary Programs in the Strait Regional Centre for Education (SRCE) have the same hours as the school in which they are housed. Programs are open Monday through Friday and follow the SRCE Academic Calendar.

The staff in the Pre-primary Program is the first point of contact for families. Each program has its own phone so if you have a question or require information, please call your Pre-primary Program directly. Please find below specific times and phone numbers for each of the programs, by school:

Program	Hours	Phone
Antigonish Education Centre-A	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-9756
Antigonish Education Centre -B	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-9758
Antigonish Education Centre -C	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-9766
Antigonish Education Centre -D	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-9131
Bayview Education Centre	8:40 a.m. – 2:40 p.m.	902-631-4459
Cape Breton Highlands Education Centre/Academy	9:00 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.	902-631-8992
Chedabucto Education Centre/ Guysborough Academy	8:40 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-4100
East Antigonish Education Centre/Academy	8:30 a.m. – 2:10 p.m.	902-870-2505
East Richmond Education Centre	8:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.	902-631-5694
Fanning Education Centre/Canso Academy	8:20 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.	902-870-4104
Felix Marchand Education Centre	8:25 a.m. – 2:40 p.m.	902-631-5459
H.M. MacDonald Elementary School	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-631-3323
Inverness Education Centre/Academy	8:35 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.	902-258-5941
St. Andrews Consolidated School	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-9437
St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-870-4145
Tamarac Education Centre-A	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-631-5724
Tamarac Education Centre -B	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	902-631-5810
Whycocomagh Education Centre	8:25 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.	902-631-4763

Staff
In each Pre-primary Program, there is one Lead ECE and one ECE. The staff-to-child complement in Pre-primary Programs is one (1) educator to ten (10) children. When required, a third ECE may be hired to provide support. Additional staff may be hired to provide support and coverage during breaks and lunch or to assist with busing.

Contact Information
Families will receive contact information for staff working in their child's Pre-primary Program. Please ensure that staff have up-to-date contact information for parents/guardians in the case of an emergency.

Program Attendance
Participation in the Pre-primary Program is voluntary. It is a family's decision to determine how often their child will attend.

Children in Pre-primary are registered in PowerSchool and their attendance is entered by staff on a daily basis. Families are asked to use the SafeArrival: Student Absence Reporting System to report absences for children or notify their educators of any changes in attendance.

Program Eligibility
Children in the school catchment area who will be four (4) years of age by December 31 of the current school year are eligible to attend the Pre-primary Program. Children may attend Pre-primary for one year only.

When there are available pre-primary spaces, families who live outside a school's catchment area may apply to have their child attend a Program out of catchment by submitting an Application for Transfer of Students within the Region Request Form located in the Resources section of the SRCE website. These spaces are limited and will only be considered when space is available and no additional staffing is required to accommodate the request.

Transportation Policy
In the SRCE, busing is available to all Pre-primary children eligible to receive bus service. Please contact the SRCE Transportation Department staff by email at transportation@srce.ca or by phone at 902-747-3645 for information and to determine your eligibility to receive bus service.

Your child can have one primary address and one alternate address for childcare. Please confirm all busing information with the Transportation Department in order to ensure staff know which bus your child should be on at arrival and departure each day. All busing information will be entered into your child's profile in PowerSchool.

The Motor Vehicle Act requires all riders under 40 pounds to use a seatbelt on a school bus, if it is available. Parents/guardians will be asked to enter the bus to buckle or unbuckle your child in the morning and again in the afternoon. A staff person will meet your child at the school to unbuckle them and will buckle them in when they leave. A reminder that an adult is required to meet your child at the bus each day. Bus drivers will not release a child unless an adult is present.

Academic Calendar
The Pre-primary Program will follow the SRCE Academic Calendar in terms of opening and closing for holidays, Holiday Break, March Break, summer, and professional development. When there is scheduled professional development or in-service days for Grades P-8, Pre-primary Programs will also be closed.

A copy of the Academic Calendar is available on the school website or the SRCE website at https://srce.ca/

Program Cancellations
The Pre-primary Program will be subject to cancellations for inclement weather and facility shutdowns. Please refer to the pamphlet entitled, *Class Cancellations Due to Weather and/or Road Conditions: A Quick Reference Guide*, which may be accessed in the Resources section of the SRCE website.

Releasing Children

Only authorized parents/guardians, or other adults who are identified and given written permission by the parents/guardians, may pick up a child. Pre-primary Program staff require contact information for all adults who have permission to pick up a child. Parents/guardians are asked to complete the "Permission to Pick Up" form with current information.

Please inform staff if an alternate person will be picking up your child. If circumstances change through the day, please call Pre-primary Program staff to advise of any changes.

Staff will ask for photo identification if they do not know the person picking up your child.

Sample Daily Routine

Arrival

Children will be met as they arrive by bus and supervised appropriately until the Pre-primary Program begins. Children being dropped off by parents/guardians should be taken directly to their room and released to Pre-primary staff.

Morning

Young children learn best through play. The Pre-primary Program provides uninterrupted play time when children will explore the learning space and create new experiences based on their own interests. During play, children will have opportunities to participate and self-select from a variety of materials and activities individually, in small or large groups. The learning environment is set up for daily experiences in art and creativity; music and movement; science and nature; math; sensory experiences; fine motor; and language and literacy development. Staff will provide opportunities for activities that support children's interests as well as their overall development.

A large group gathering may happen in the morning, which is an opportunity for children and educators to engage in stories, song and shared experiences. There may be times that ECEs plan a specific activity for the children, such as a science experiment or baking, to expand on children's interests and curiosity. Throughout the day, ECEs will observe and document children's play to facilitate further learning opportunities.

Open Snack

Open Snack is offered in the morning and afternoon. ECEs will let children know when snack is available. Children will have the opportunity to choose whether or not they want a snack and when they want to go to the snack table. This allows children to respond to their own hunger cues and to continue playing until they feel ready to eat. ECEs will provide a variety of snack options and children are encouraged to serve themselves, choosing what they want in a family-style setting. ECEs will support children during snack to ensure good health practices are maintained, provide help when needed, and to model appropriate mealtime behaviors.

Outside Play

Outdoor activities are an important part of the curriculum. Having ample time to explore nature plays a vital role in child development. Children need time to use their large muscles and develop gross motor skills. Outside play stimulates the senses and provides opportunities and ability to learn in different ways. While outdoors, children have learning opportunities in all curriculum areas through interaction with nature, exploring loose parts, developing social skills, and discovering their community and environment. Staff will encourage children to explore natural play spaces and ensure children have rich and developmentally appropriate experiences while

outdoors. As outside play is an important part of the Pre-primary Program, children will be outside every day weather permitting. Mud suits will be provided for children as required.

Due to insurance reasons, children in Pre-primary will not be permitted to access playground equipment intended for children aged 5-12.

Lunch

When children come inside, they will have time to transition as they get ready for lunch. Children and staff will sit together during lunch.

Quiet Time

As children finish lunch, they will be encouraged to engage in restful activities, such as stories, puzzles, or other quiet choices. This will help them transition from lunch at their own pace, recognizing that some children require more time to eat than others, and allow them to recharge their batteries after a busy morning.

Play Time and Departure

As with the morning program, children will have an opportunity to choose from large group, small group, and individual activities. Staff will provide support and materials as well as document children's learning. An afternoon snack will also be provided.

When children depart for the day, staff will accompany them to the bus. If they are being picked up, children must be released to a designated adult who has been previously approved by the parent/ guardian.

**** Throughout the week, the children may have opportunities to participate in activities in the school, such as library, gym, Reading Buddies, cooking programs, and other school events that are determined to be appropriate for children in Pre-primary. It is important for children to feel comfortable in the school environment and develop positive relationships with staff and students.***

Safety Protocols

Children in the Pre-primary Program are part of the school community. Therefore**,** they are required to participate in any safety protocols that are used to ensure the safety of all those using the building. These protocols may include fire drills, evacuation, evacuation/relocation, lockdown or hold-and-secure situations.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

Families will receive communication highlighting events that are happening throughout the month. Children in Pre-primary may be invited to participate in school activities such as musical events, dramatic/theatre presentations, or other school-wide activities that may be developmentally appropriate for them. Pre-primary staff will communicate with school administration to determine which events may be of interest to Pre-primary children and will make a plan to remove children from activities if they lose interest.

Pre-primary Programs and staff are supervised by school administration. If you have questions or concerns about the Program, please speak with the Pre-primary staff in your school or contact the school administration.

Social Emotional Learning and Positive Behaviour Support
The development of social emotional skills helps children develop self-regulation and social competence. When children are supported to manage their emotions and make good decisions in the early years, they will be set on a successful path for learning and for life.

Educators promote a positive atmosphere that supports children in developing their sense of well-being for themselves and others around them. These are important skills that are identified as learning goals for children in the Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework.

Educators create environments where children:

- *feel safe, secure and supported*
- *become strong in their social and emotional well-being*
- *take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical well being*
- *develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities*

Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework

Together, families and educators work to help children develop these skills. In Pre-primary Programs, children have clear expectations for behaviour that are reinforced daily. Staff model respectful relationships, help children with problem-solving, and give children the opportunity to develop emotional literacy by identifying and talking about feelings.

Children learn to make good decisions when clear expectations are set. Our Pre-primary Programs have developed program-wide expectations that align with the Positive Effective Behaviour Support (PEBS) program. These expectations provide familiar language for children as they move from pre-primary to primary. Our program-wide expectations are:

- Respect for Self
- Respect for Others
- Respect for the Environment

Educators use a variety of pro-social behaviour guidance strategies to help children develop the skills they need to successfully engage with peers and adults. These include providing positive language for what they want children to do; focusing on positive behaviour; responding with compassion and caring when children are upset; redirecting; and providing choices in challenging situations.

The health and safety of all children is a priority. Children will not be suspended or expelled from the Pre-primary Program. When children are hurt, emotionally or physically, by a peer, reassurance is given to both children. Staff work to help children learn how to respond appropriately and to ensure their safety at all times.

Health Practices
Children are expected to engage in all aspects of the Pre-primary Program at their own level of interest and development. Staff will use their discretion in recommending exclusion from the Pre-primary Program for health reasons in accordance with the Nova Scotia Guidelines for Communicable Disease Prevention and Control in Child Care Settings.

If a child has any of the following conditions while attending the Program, families will be contacted to take their child home:

- an illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in the program activities, including playing outdoors;

- an illness that results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children;
- fever AND other symptoms (sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, earache) or behaviour change in children;
- sudden change in patterns of behavior; listlessness or excessive sleepiness;
- difficulty breathing or persistent cough;
- diarrhea: two (2) or more episodes or diarrhea with fever, vomiting or blood in the stool;
- vomiting: two (2) or more episodes;
- severe abdominal pain or abdominal pain with any other symptoms of illness;
- rash AND fever or other sign of illness;
- has a wound that cannot be covered;
- yellowish skin or eyes, or “jaundice”; and
- the presence of live lice, scabies, impetigo, or other non-reportable infections, requires that a child be excluded from the program until they have been treated.

If a child requires medication while at school, the protocol will be followed according to the Strait Regional Centre for Education Administration of Medication Policy IV-B-2 and supporting procedures, PRO IV-B-2.

Plan for Identifying Special Health Care Needs

If your child has a life-threatening allergy or health care needs, it is important to inform the school administration who will ensure the necessary forms are completed and help develop a plan to support your child.

If necessary, ECEs will be trained in the use of an epi-pen, puffers, or other specialized procedures. Children with chronic medical conditions, such as serious allergies, diabetes, etc., must have an annual Emergency Medical Plan Form developed, maintained and posted at the school. The Pre-primary Program is subject to the health and safety policies and regulations of the SRCE.

Inclusion

The Pre-primary Program is an inclusive program. Children with diverse abilities will continue to have access to the same services and supports they would receive at home or in a community-based program when they are in the Pre-primary Program. Families should contact school administration to discuss your child's needs and plan for a successful transition into Pre-primary.

Modifications may be made to programs and environments in order to provide an inclusive environment for all children. If a child has identified needs, staff will be made aware and trained in individual routine-based plans. Individual programming is developed appropriately and incorporated within daily activities as much as possible, in consultation with parents/guardians and other service providers.

The community-based supports available to pre-school aged children will continue to support children in the Pre-primary Program. This includes Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services, Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres, Provincial Pre-school Autism Services, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA), among other partners.

ECEs will meet with families and any team members who support your child to learn about your child. Staff will want to know what your child likes to do, what motivates them, and what your goals are for

your child. Staff will use this information, combined with their knowledge of the routine and best practices in early learning, to develop a plan that outlines how your child will be supported during the day.

Families will be involved in setting goals for your child. Staff will address the priorities and concerns of families of children with diverse abilities in cooperation with other professionals working with the child.

School Food and Nutrition Policy
The Pre-primary Program provides nutritious morning and afternoon snacks. Please inform staff of any allergies or dietary restrictions your child may have.

Families may access the Provincial School Lunch Program or provide a lunch for their child.

Most schools in the SRCE are peanut-aware environments. Please read food labels carefully, and do not send foods that **contain** or **may contain** peanuts or tree nuts. Please check with the school for other information regarding additional allergy alerts and precautions.

Clothing
It is important that your child has appropriate clothing while at the school.

- Sturdy shoes for running and active play. A pair of shoes may be left at the school.
- **Play is fun and often messy!** In order for children to participate freely in daily activities, they should not have to worry about their clothes getting dirty. Please send them in clothes that can get messy. We cannot promise that paint, mud, markers and other materials will wash out of clothing.
- Please send a complete change of clothes for your child and check it each day in case an item needs to be replaced. If possible, families may wish to send extra socks and underwear, and extra mittens during the colder months. Please consider clothing for changing weather as days can start cool and become warm or vice versa.
- Outdoor play is a part of our daily program. Children will be going outside every day, except for very inclement weather. Please ensure your child has appropriate clothing for the weather, including footwear.
- Each Pre-primary Program provides mud suits for children to use while outside. They will be kept at the school for daily use.

Understanding a "Play-Based" Program

"Play expands intelligence, stimulates the imagination, encourages creative problem solving, and helps develop confidence, self-esteem, and a positive attitude toward learning."
Dr. Fraser Mustard

Play is very important for children. It is how they experience their world and bring meaning to it. Play engages young children and promotes learning in all areas of children's development:

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Social Competence
- Emotional Maturity
- Language and Cognitive Development
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge

The Pre-primary Program values the importance of play as the learning process for children. Play is powerful and child-centered. It is active learning for young children. Although it may seem like children are not "learning" when they play, it is during play that children have an opportunity to select activities independently and develop skills in all areas of development. The Pre-primary staff gather valuable information on skills, interests, and group dynamics during observations of play.

- Play develops children's creativity and problem-solving skills. For example, when children pretend, they are role playing based on their own experiences.
- Play prepares children better for school learning. For example, talking about storybooks helps children expand their vocabulary and become familiar with print.
- Play is healthy. It promotes strength, coordination, and brain development. For example, when children build things with large and small blocks, they use their gross and fine motor skills.
- Play develops new skills that build self-esteem. Children try out materials and equipment at their own level, at their own pace. When they master a new skill, they feel good about their own success.
- Play teaches social skills and helps children develop friendships. When children play together, they learn to problem solve and to help each other. They learn from each other.
- A play-based approach to early learning builds upon children's natural inclination to make sense of the world through play. Early childhood educators guide the natural play process. They extend children's explorations with narrative, novelty, and challenges.

The Pre-primary Program is child led and play-based. The day is planned around the group's interests. Your child's interests and abilities are accounted for in this planning. Small group activities will be planned in a way to ensure your child is successful.

A recent publication by the Council of Ministers of Education – Canada stated:

"Educators should intentionally plan and create challenging, dynamic, play-based learning opportunities. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been done that way.
Intentional teaching involves educators being deliberate and purposeful in creating play-based learning environments — because when children are playing, children are learning."

Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework

Staff in Pre-primary use the provincial early learning curriculum framework as a guide to their practice for the daily program. Through the implementation of the framework, your child will develop skills in four key areas:

Well Being

Your child will:

- feel safe, secure, and supported.
- develop social skills and make friends.
- start to learn responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Discovery and Invention

Your child will:

- be curious, confident, and creative — and use their imagination.
- learn through problem-solving, trying new things, and asking lots of questions.

Language and Communication

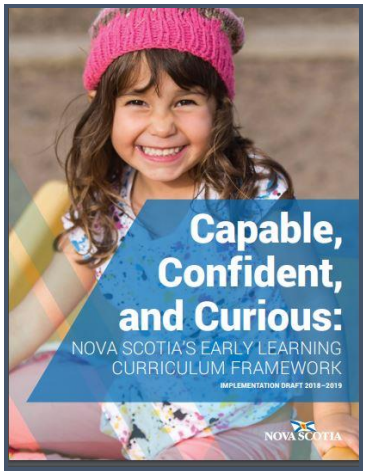
Your child will:

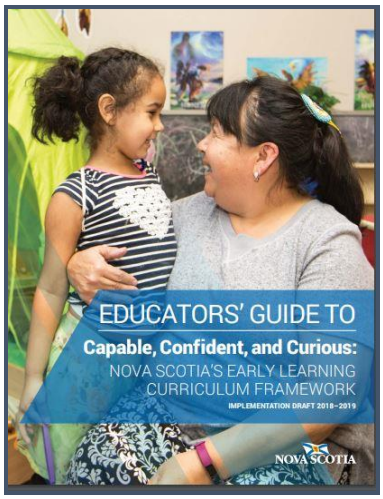
- express themselves in a variety of ways.
- see different types of print and learn about symbols and patterns.
- learn how to find information and follow through with their ideas.
- develop a strong foundation in French, if they live in a French minority language community.

Personal and Social Responsibility

Your child will:

- learn about respect, fairness, and the feelings of others.
- develop an awareness and respect for the world around them.
- feel a sense of belonging to groups and communities.





https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/nselcurriculumframework.pdf

https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/nselcfeducatorsguide.pdf

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