



## Recommended Actions for Education in Support of Early Learning and Care



May 28, 2021

### Overview

EndPovertyEdmonton identified early learning and care as one of six “game changers” that must be addressed if poverty is to be eliminated from Edmonton in a generation. EndPovertyEdmonton has also recognized the need to work toward an integrated system of high quality and affordable early learning and care. The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELc) was created to pursue this work. It comprises eighteen institutional and community partners with expertise and experience in early learning and care.

The ECELc has worked diligently to assess current conditions and needs, to develop partnerships, and to explore options. The following recommendations present an opportunity to act and identify a clear path forward.

Based on work to date, the ECELc recommends, in partnership with the City of Edmonton and school boards, the following actions that provide initial steps toward building a system of early learning and care that will:

- provide high quality early learning and care that is affordable, accessible, and inclusive for all families that need it, including low-income and vulnerable families;
- nurture healthy social, emotional, and intellectual development in children, preparing them for success in school and in their communities;
- support families who need or want to improve their employment status and/or advance their education or training;
- advance the City of Edmonton’s commitments to economic recovery from the pandemic, to gender equity, to elimination of poverty, and to the wellbeing of Indigenous, newcomer, low-income, and vulnerable families;
- position Edmonton to benefit from the plan for a national system of early learning and child care, as described in the federal budget of April, 2021; and
- support the rights of children and parents (as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and advance reconciliation (as prescribed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in its *Calls to Action*).

Edmonton needs an integrated system of early learning and care for its young children and families. To build a system that can accomplish the above outcomes requires systemic, coordinated solutions to meet the needs of the city’s diverse and expanding population.

School boards are in a unique position to be an integral part of the development, support and sustainability of a system of early learning and care that will benefit children and families in their journey to and through the education system. This requires school boards to partner with the City of Edmonton to address barriers to high-quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive early learning and care. The following five actions will target pressing issues for families, help to reduce barriers, and will create and strengthen partnerships to support families of young children to access early learning and care.



## Recommended Actions for the City of Edmonton in Support of Early Learning and Care

### Actions

#### Action 1:

That School Board staff engage with City of Edmonton staff, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, and other levels of government to convene and resource a Data Working Group to ensure that the data required for needs assessments and for planning and managing a system of early learning and care are collected, analyzed, and shared to inform distribution of and access to early learning and care within the City of Edmonton, school communities and neighbourhoods.

#### Action 2:

That School Board staff engage with City of Edmonton staff, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, the provincial government, and community partners, to convene and resource a Problem-Solving Working Group to address issues in finding space, co-locating services, and addressing issues of affordability, quality, and inclusiveness in early learning and care in or around schools and communities where services are needed by families of young children.

#### Action 3:

That School Board staff develop partnership guidelines or regulations to provide a framework for school and child care partnerships within school buildings or nearby community child care centres within the school attendance area. The guidelines will outline school and child care engagement and collaboration to support high-quality programming, environments and child/family involvement. Examples may include involving child care centres in school events such as assemblies, sports days or artist in residence, and providing access to professional learning and resources for child care staff.

#### Action 4:

That the School Board trustees, with advice from the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, advocate for an integrated system of early learning and care that is high in quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive for all families that need it, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of low-income and vulnerable families.

#### Action 5:

That School Board trustees, with advice from the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, advocate to the provincial government for funding and infrastructure guidelines to include dedicated child care space within new school builds and renovations, as a reliable support for families and children in the school community.

### Conclusion

The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care looks forward to working with the City Council, School Boards and administration to take action in developing and implementing an overarching system of early learning and care to support the needs of families and children into the future.

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*For questions or further discussion, please contact [info@ecelc.ca](mailto:info@ecelc.ca).*