



Your Future in MIND

## "Getting the Best Start"

### Changes to Kindergarten Entrance Age

Beginning in **September 2014**, a child is eligible to start Kindergarten if he/she will be **five** years old on or before **December 31<sup>st</sup>** of that school year.

**Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS)** is moving the kindergarten enrolment cut-off from March 01<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> because this change:

- better positions our students and schools for the implementation of the principles of Inspiring Education.
- acts on local and provincial evidence that our younger kindergarten students are more likely to have learning and social challenges in kindergarten and in subsequent years.
- more closely aligns with our beliefs and advice to parents.
- reflects educational research – specifically in the area of literacy outcomes.
- coordinates the entrance ages for kindergarten and early intervention (Play And Learn at School (PALS) programs)

**Inspiring Education** (Alberta Education, 2010) provides the direction for the future of Alberta's education system. It is a learner-centred approach that focuses on building competencies. Within this revised mandate, the **best start** to school becomes even more important.

**Twenty-six school boards** across the province currently use December 31<sup>st</sup> as the cut-off for kindergarten enrolment.

**Age span** is one of the most challenging aspects for kindergarten teachers as they must teach to a wide variety of cognitive and social maturity levels. The change to December 31<sup>st</sup> decreases the potential age span in kindergarten by two months.

**Research** demonstrates that children who begin school at a somewhat older age perform better at the start of school, show greater improvement over the course of their first years of schooling, and function at a more advanced level in third grade than children who began at a somewhat younger age (NICHD Early Childhood Research Network, 2007).

**Children** beginning Kindergarten at a young age are often not socially mature enough to cope with the expectations in an ECS classroom. This can lead to a decrease in self-confidence that can follow them throughout their school career.

*Kindergarten Teacher, Elk Island Public Schools*

**Using December 31<sup>st</sup>** as the cut-off date for kindergarten enrolment will have a significant positive impact for all students.

*Kindergarten Teacher, Elk Island Public Schools*

**Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS)** practice has been to encourage families to delay kindergarten enrolment if their child is born between January and the end of February. The change to December 31<sup>st</sup> more closely aligns with our philosophy but continues to offer most families choice.

**Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS)** offers programming for children aged 3 ½ to 4 ½ in our Play And Learn at School (PALS) programs. (<http://www.eips.ca/system-special-education-programs>).

**Research** demonstrates significant differences in early literacy development between younger and older students in kindergarten which remain statistically significant at the end of Grade 2 (Huang & Invernizzi, 2012).

**In a large-scale study** of 15 year olds' achievement levels using PISA data, relative age at the start of primary school had a significant positive effect on PISA scores in half of the considered countries and regions (Sprietsma, 2010).