

# News Release

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January 23, 2014

For Immediate Release

## EICS Launches Step 2 - Community Engagement on Programming

Sherwood Park, AB – The purpose of EICS TALKS ([www.eicstalks.ca](http://www.eicstalks.ca)) is to foster ongoing dialogue with our partners about the preferred future of our Division. During the 2012-2013 school year, the focus of EICS TALKS was the reconfiguration of our schools. In 2013-2014, we are engaging stakeholders in a discussion around **programming**, specifically, **alternative programming, options, current curriculum offerings** and **age of entry to Kindergarten**.

In December, EICS TALKS started the conversation about **programming** by using an on-line engagement tool called Thoughtstream. It gathers individual thoughts and perspectives by inviting stakeholders to respond to open ended questions. Once the feedback is gathered, Thoughtstream 'converges' it into like themes, then shares those themes back with the community. This gives stakeholders the opportunity to view and read what others have said (anonymously) and to prioritize the themes, by identifying those which they feel are most important.

Thoughtstream: Step 1, collecting individual thoughts and perspectives, was open to stakeholders from November 25 to December 9, 2013. We received some great feedback that will contribute to our ongoing efforts to continuously provide the highest quality 21st century Catholic education for all of our students. Thoughtstream has since completed the task of 'converging' that feedback into like themes.

Thoughtstream: Step 2, sharing these like themes with the community for prioritizing, is being launched on January 23, 2014. Even if you were not able to participate and contribute feedback in Step 1, we encourage you to join the conversation now. Thoughtstream: Step 2 will be open until Wednesday, February 5, 2014.

Links to Thoughtstream: Step 2 are posted on the EICS TALKS website to give all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate. To participate, please visit: [www.eicstalks.ca](http://www.eicstalks.ca)

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*EICS, part of Alberta's publicly funded education system, is committed to developing educational opportunities in the context of Gospel values. EICS is dedicated to providing quality, faith-based learning environments to students of any background and faith, where their skills are nurtured and celebrated by dedicated, caring staff.*

**For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

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## BACKGROUND

### Programming Review within EICS

As we engage students, parents, teachers and the community about programming within our Division, Alberta Education offers excellent resources to help prepare for this discussion. Albertans have told us that our education system must grow and adapt in order to meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities of a constantly evolving world. While we may not know exactly what the future holds, we do know that some competencies and attributes will be particularly important to the success of our students: Engaged Thinkers, Ethical Citizens, and Entrepreneurial Spirits. To shape innovative ideas into real-world solutions, our education system should develop motivated, resourceful and resilient citizens. Alberta would do well to encourage our students to be bold, embrace leadership and actively seek new opportunities. For detailed information, please visit the links below on the Alberta Education website:

[Inspiring Education - Alberta's Vision for Education](#)

[Curriculum Redesign](#)

[Research and Innovation in Education](#)

[Locally Developed Courses](#)

[Education Act: Regulatory Review](#)

### Background Information - Kindergarten Age of Entry

Currently, a child is eligible to start Kindergarten in EICS if he/she will be **five years old on or before March 1<sup>st</sup> of that school year**. However, EICS is considering changing the enrolment cut-off from March 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, based upon significant research. Twenty-six school boards across the province currently use December 31<sup>st</sup> at 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.

**Inspiring Education** (Alberta Education, 2010) provides the direction for the future of the education system in Alberta. It is a learner-centered approach that focuses on building competencies. Within this revised mandate, Kindergarten Age of Entry to school becomes even more important.

### Did you Know?

Twenty-six school boards across the Province of Alberta 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 decreases the potential age span in kindergarten by two months.

### Highlights from Current Research

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*)

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*).

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