



Effective From	AY 2024/25 (Fall term)
Compliance From	AY 2025/26 (Fall term)

EARLY EDUCATION INSTITUTION **POLICY**

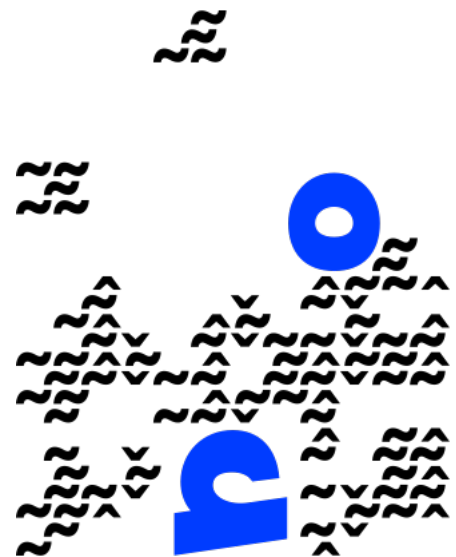
on

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Purpose

This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for the learning and development of children within Early Education Institutions (EEIs). It ensures consistency in educational programs and practices and creates a nurturing and enriching environment that supports the holistic growth of every child.

The policy outlines the principles, objectives, and guidelines that govern an EEI's educational approach, promotes a high standard of quality and effectiveness, and fosters collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.



Definitions

Adaptive Teaching Approach	Refers to an instruction method adjusted or tailored to meet the individual learning needs, abilities, and preferences of learners. This approach acknowledges that learners vary in their strengths, challenges, interests, and learning styles, and therefore, it aims to accommodate these differences to optimize learning outcomes.
Additional Learning Needs	<p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within an early years setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by children of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented).</p> <p>For example, a child with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a child with hearing impairment may require additional support in class to access lesson content but may not require any physical accommodations to access learning.</p>
Auditory	A learning style where a learner learns more effectively by listening and hearing.
Child	A person under the age of 4 years, as per Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries.
Diversity	Describes individual differences amongst the learner population such as learning styles, experiences, personality types, language backgrounds, and group/social differences (e.g., age, gender, race, class, country of origin, ability, etc.).
Differentiation	Providing varied levels of challenge and support to accommodate different learning abilities and styles within a single classroom or educational setting.
Early Education Institutions (EIs)	All ADEK-licensed institutions that offer early years service (e.g., nurseries).
Early Education Professionals	Specialists who look after the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and educational development of young children.
Early Identification	The practice of recognizing developmental milestones in children, to predict those likely to experience delays, difficulties, or developmental variations.
Enabling Environment	Describes a learning space which is stimulating and safe, supporting children's learning and development, offering opportunities to play, to freely exist, to learn, and to explore.

Equity	Seeking fairness and impartiality, recognizing an imbalance, providing individual support to learners to address potential barriers to learning.
Free Play	A form of play where children choose what they want to do, how they want to do it, and when to stop and try something else. Free play has no external goals set by adults and has no adult-imposed curriculum/program. Although adults usually provide the space and resources for free play and might be involved, the child takes the lead, and the adults respond to cues from the child.
Inclusive Education	An approach to education where all children learn alongside peers in which barriers to access and achievement are identified and removed.
Innate	Inherent qualities and characteristics of a child, usually derived from the intellect or the constitution of the mind, rather than something learned from experience.
Key Group	Known as a “class” in more formal educational settings, comprises a group of children, an EE Educator, and any other members of the key team.
Key Team	The team of staff in a child’s key group, whom they interact with daily and who take care of their physical, emotional, and educational needs, typically including the EE Educator, EE Assistant, and EE Aide.
Kinesthetic	A learning style linking the process of learning to physical activity, through manipulation or touch of materials.
Learning Approach	Describes the purposes, skills, and behaviors (emotional, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation, initiative, curiosity, and creativity) that guide children to learn.
Peer Collaboration	Working with colleagues to share ideas, solve problems, and try out new techniques and methods.
Pedagogy	Philosophy, method, and practice of teaching.
Programing Strategy	A coherent set of pre-designed activities designed to achieve a specified goal or set of objectives.
Risky Play	A physical, expressive, and exciting form of play, which involves an element of risk, challenge, and adventure.
Visual	A learning style where a learner learns by reading or seeing images.



Policy

EEIs shall ensure that any adopted curriculum/program is approved by ADEK as required by Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries. Approval from ADEK is also required before implementing any changes, modifications, or additions to the curricula, programs, or supplementary materials used.

In addition, all EEIs shall develop and implement a Learning and Development Policy, which includes the following priorities:

1. The child's needs
2. The importance of play in learning
3. Provision for diversity, equity, inclusion and national identity
4. The learning environment
5. Presence of supportive trained adults
6. Assessment of quality and planning improvement
7. Involvement of parents in their child's learning

1. The Child's Needs

EEIs shall consider the child's view and agency and build their Learning and Development Policy around their needs and innate characteristics. Therefore, EEIs shall provide opportunities to learn and develop through:

- a) Sensory exploration.
- b) Freedom to choose and explore at their own pace.
- c) Freedom of movement – with clear, consistent boundaries that they understand.
- d) Opportunities to socialize, hear, and exchange language.
- e) Self-expression activities such as art, singing, music, and movement.
- f) The concrete manipulation of materials and resources.
- g) Physical exercise, sports, and movement.
- h) Guidance and support from a trained individual who understands the needs of the developmental stages of the children, and their need to be respected and treated as responsible individuals.
- i) Warm and secure relationships.

2. The Importance of Play

2.1 Active Learning Through Play

EEIs shall design their Learning and Development Policy and curriculum/program to provide a variety of play opportunities for children to facilitate active learning, with most of the play being child-led, whereby EE professionals follow children's interests, helping them to take initiatives, make their own decisions, and become active learners.

2.2 Benefits of Play in Early Years

EEl shall ensure that the learning and development play opportunities they offer benefit children by developing their:

- Social skills
- Emotional maturity and behavior management
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Physical development
- Problem-solving skills
- Language and vocabulary development
- Mathematical awareness
- Sensory awareness

2.3 The Role of Education in Play

EEl shall ensure that educators understand the importance of play-based learning and can link it with the kinds of play suitable for the children under their care. When providing play opportunities, educators shall conduct observations while children play to support their learning and development (see [ADEK EEI Observations and Assessments Policy](#)) and ensure that they consider the:

- Age of the children
- Developmental level of the children
- Purpose or aim the play is intended for
- Size of the room or space they are going to use
- Level of supervision that will be required
- Duration of time available to execute the playtime

2.4 Free Play and Risk

EEl shall ensure that children have access to free play opportunities, which are supervised by trained staff who have a clear understanding of what free play means, know how to prepare a safe play environment, and allow children to simply “play” (see [ADEK EEI Child Supervision Policy](#) and [ADEK EEI Risk Management Policy](#)). Providing a safe free play environment, in which children can experience risk on an individual level and within a safe environment, is necessary for their development.

To provide free play, EEl learning environments (indoors or outdoors) shall:

- a) Be set out for children with a variety of developmentally appropriate resources.
- b) Meet the safety and supervision requirements of an early education environment.
- c) Allow the children to choose what they want to do, how they want to do it, and when to stop and try something else.
- d) Be managed with clear boundaries taking into consideration the importance of a child’s needs to choose their own play.
- e) Be facilitated by the adults in the environment, with necessary intervention only when a child shall be protected from harm or injury.

3. Provision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and National Identity

3.1 Diversity and Equity

Every child has a right to the best care and a quality learning environment that provides a sense of belonging and acceptance to each child. This is why EEIs shall ensure that:

- a) The unique qualities of each child and family are taken into perspective.
- b) Teaching and assessment strategies are designed and planned to allow for all children to reach their full potential in an unbiased, safe, and accessible environment, and that staff consider the following:
 - Approaching a child’s confusing or challenging behavior as an opportunity for inquiry.
 - Using authentic assessments that seek to identify children’s strengths and provide a well-rounded picture of development.
 - Focusing on strengths.
- c) Multilingual educators are recruited, giving them appropriate professional responsibilities, and linking them in collaborative relationships with others in the field.
- d) Staff training includes awareness of dealing with differences in culture, religious beliefs, and backgrounds, and develops skills to be well-versed in having conversations about bias with young children.
- e) They deliver a diverse and equitable program that aims to identify, minimize, and/or remove barriers to learning and support to facilitate the success of all children while maintaining the best educational standards.
- f) They implement strategies that provide equitable learning opportunities for the children in their care and that learning is accessible and appropriately challenging for all.

3.2 Inclusion

EEIs shall clearly outline how they will support the learning and development of children with additional learning needs. It is strongly recommended that every EEI appoints a staff member specifically trained in handling children with additional learning needs.

To guarantee an inclusive learning environment, EEIs shall:

- a) Establish a process to identify, track, and develop interventions for a child with additional learning needs (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#) and [ADEK EEI Observations and Assessments Policy](#)).
- b) Ensure that the maximum number of children that require extra support with their additional learning needs does not exceed 3 children in any learning group.

- c) Integrate inclusive learning strategies into all activities and learning opportunities planned.
- d) Provide all staff with training sessions on the importance of adaptive teaching strategies for supporting children with additional learning needs.
- e) Incorporate adaptive teaching methods, employing a range of teaching approaches (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and materials (books, manipulatives, multimedia) to address various learning styles.
- f) Offer professional expert training on early identification of learning difficulties in young children and tips on dealing with children with additional learning needs regarding their behavior, comprehension, cognition, or physical skills.
- g) Ensure that assistive technology options are made available, where appropriate, to provide alternative ways for children with additional learning needs to interact with their environment, access information, communicate, and perform tasks that may be challenging due to physical, sensory, cognitive, or communication impairments.
- h) Create and maintain a structured and systematic method of observations and assessments that will track the progress of children in their expected developmental milestones.
- i) Engage parents and keep them fully informed of their child's progress including any cause for concern.
- j) Facilitate support for children with additional learning needs who may require daily specialized support, usually given by individual assistants (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#) for more details).
- k) Establish a comprehensive support program to help children identified as having additional learning needs.
- l) Establish a process that clarifies the action the EEI will take while involving parents with their support plan.
- m) Have a process in place to identify, track, and develop interventions for a child with additional learning needs (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#) and [ADEK EEI Observations and Assessments Policy](#)).
- n) Train staff to be alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties, respond quickly and appropriately, and involve parents and other agencies, as necessary.

3.3 National Identity

EEIs shall ensure that daily opportunities are provided to expose all children to the culture and values of the UAE and to learn the Arabic language taught by a native Arabic-speaking EE Educator.

EEl's shall offer a curriculum/program that provides children with the highest standards in education while fostering UAE culture and national identity. This shall be achieved through a mindful incorporation of cultural values, national identity, and promotion of the Arabic language in line with the EEl's ADEK-approved curriculum/program.

4. The Learning Environment

For children to learn best, EEl's shall give them access to an environment that is created specifically for their use, planned with the selected learning approach in mind, enabling children to feel safe, play independently, and make choices throughout the day in a happy, positive climate.

4.1 A Prepared Environment

EEl's shall keep in mind the children's innate needs, developmental objectives (physical, social, intellectual, cognitive, creative, emotional, and linguistic), and the EEl's approach to learning when preparing the learning environment (physical and emotional). When an environment is being 'prepared' for children, EEl's shall prioritize the below:

- a) Maintaining the ratio of EE educators within each key group, depending on its size (e.g., the number of children in each key group; see [section 5.1 Educator-to-Child Ratio](#) below for more details).
- b) The maximum number of children using the resources at one time.
- c) Freedom of safe, comfortable movement of children within the environment.
- d) Structure and order.
- e) The beauty of design – including avoiding overstimulation with bright colors.
- f) Nature and reality.
- g) Children's social, intellectual, and emotional developmental needs.
- h) Creating a warm and accepting emotional environment, which is a result of all the people in it.
- i) Ensuring the presence of differentiated activities and resources to accommodate children's additional learning needs.

4.2 A Stimulating Environment

EEl's shall ensure a stimulating environment for children to encourage knowledge-seeking by using appropriate learning resources and arranging them in a way that allows the children to freely interact with them.

4.3 An Interactive Environment

EElS shall provide opportunities for meaningful interactions that challenge children, provide support through child-to-child and child-to-adult interactions, encourage active learning, and allow children to freely manipulate, experiment, move, and discover. To create and maintain an interactive environment, EElS shall:

- a) Ensure that the experiences and environment offer room for outdoor and indoor play, sufficient space for children to move and collaborate, and encourage exploration and risk-taking.
- b) Provide a range of experiences that serve different purposes such as inspiring imagination and role play, exploration of personal relationships and feelings, problem-solving, and quiet time and reflection.
- c) Ensure the experiences and environment meet the needs of all the children who attend, from very young infants to older children.
- d) Consider how all children are made to feel welcomed and valued.
- e) Ensure that each individual child is attended to.
- f) Ensure staff understand the importance of building warm and supportive relationships and the importance of nurturing a child's development.
- g) Involve children in making the EEl's ground rules for behavior and creating the behavioral codes of practice thus giving opportunities for them to develop their agency and decision-making skills.

4.4 A Consistent Schedule

EElS shall develop and implement a regular schedule suitable to the children's needs as consistency is an indirect contributor to children's personal and emotional development.

4.5 A Safe Environment

EElS shall provide a safe and well-laid-out environment to prevent accidents, minimize behavior issues, promote social development, and allow for a smooth movement within the various areas of the EEl (see [ADEK EEl Risk Management Policy](#), [ADEK Behavior Management Policy](#), and [ADEK EEl Physical Environment Policy](#)). The EEl shall also ensure that the number of children within each learning space, indoor and outdoor, is in line with the specifications mentioned in the [ADEK EEl Physical Environment Policy](#).

5. Supportive, Trained Adults

To enhance children’s learning and development, EEIs shall employ knowledgeable, responsive, reflective, and qualified early education professionals who are trained to prioritize the child’s best interests (see [ADEK Child Supervision Policy](#) and [ADEK Staffing Policy](#)).

EEIs shall ensure that an Inclusion lead is nominated to coordinate all aspects of educational, behavioral, social, sensory, and emotional provision for children with additional learning needs through liaison with other EE Educators and professionals (see [ADEK EEI Inclusion Policy](#)).

5.1 Educator-to-Child Ratio

To maximize the quality of learning and attention given to each child, EEIs shall assign sufficient numbers of EE educators depending on the number of children in each key group. The table below represents the EE educator ratio applicable as per the number of children registered within the key group.

Table 1. Ratio of EE Educators to Number of Children

Age group	Requirement of 1 EE Educator per key group
1-2 years	16 children
2-3 years	16 children
3-4 years	20 children

ADEK does not place a cap on the maximum number of children within a learning space, provided the EEI adheres to the minimum space requirement per child according to their age group in addition to abiding by the adult-to-child and EE Educator-to-child ratios (see [ADEK Child Supervision Policy](#)).

An In-training EE Educator can be included in the EE Educator-to-child ratio, but they are not permitted to lead the key group (see [ADEK EEI Staffing Policy](#)).

EEIs shall ensure that they abide by the above requirement, as of September 2027.

EEIs with a fee classification level in the low-to-mid range shall have a grace period until 1 September 2029, after which they are subject to these ratios (see [ADEK EEI Child Supervision Policy Guide](#) (Appendix 2)).

5.2 Qualification, Training, and Collaboration

EEIs shall ensure that peer collaboration is a key component of the EEI’s CPD program and that their staff are:

- a) Qualified and eligible to carry out the designated role and responsibility they have been hired for (see [ADEK EEI Staffing Policy](#)).

- b) Aware of their job description and have been through a comprehensive staff induction program before starting (see [ADEK EEI Staffing Policy](#)).
- c) Engaged in regular training on the implementation of the learning approach being followed at the EEI.
- d) Regularly trained on behavior management strategies, observation and assessment, and the planning and preparation of a stimulating, safe, and inclusive environment, which are integral to delivering a successful learning program (see [ADEK EEI Behavior Management Policy](#), [ADEK EEI Observation and Assessment Policy](#), [ADEK EEI Physical Environment Policy](#) and [section 4.1 A Prepared Environment](#)).
- e) Given regular opportunities to collaborate, observe, and engage with their peers.

5.3 Approach

EEIs shall ensure that the adults in their EEI are aware that their approach has a direct impact on children’s learning and development, which is why they shall build a supportive environment by:

- Valuing all children
- Considering their individual needs
- Building warm and trusting relationships

EEIs shall ensure that the adaptive teaching approach is used by all educators in the learning environment (see [ADEK EEI Learning and Development Policy Guide](#)).

5.4 Supporting as a Guide, Facilitator, and Role Model

EEIs shall ensure that the adults in their EEI support children with their learning and development as a guide and a facilitator.

EEIs shall ensure that the adults in the EEI environment fulfill their duties as role models, with regard to behavior, language, values, and respect for the UAE culture.

6. Assessment of Quality and Planning Improvement

EEIs shall develop and implement an internal, continuous quality improvement system, which measures and monitors the effectiveness of the learning program and teaching practice.

The findings shall be used to plan the EEI’s professional staff development, improve the physical and learning environment, and enhance engagement and relationships with parents and young children.

In addition, EEIs shall also implement a system to regularly assess staff satisfaction and motivation (see [ADEK EEI Staffing Policy](#)).

7. Involving Parents in Their Children’s Learning

EElS shall state that parents are expected to be actively involved in their children’s learning and development and commit to providing them with the necessary support.

7.1 Parent Communication

EElS shall continuously engage parents in the learning and development of their children in line with the [ADEK EEI Parent Engagement and Communication Policy](#), and the [ADEK EEI Observations and Assessments Policy](#).

7.2 Parent Involvement

Parents shall be provided with training and enriching learning opportunities which would help to enhance their understanding of how young children develop and learn. (see [ADEK EEI Parent Engagement and Communication Policy](#)).

7.3 Parent Feedback

EElS shall develop and implement a regular feedback mechanism, which provides parents with the opportunity to provide feedback on the EEl’s learning opportunities (see [ADEK EEI Parent Engagement and Communication Policy](#)).

8. Compliance

8.1 This policy shall be effective as of the start of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). EElS are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term).

8.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK’s regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the EEl is found to be in violation of its obligations.

References

- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments
- Federal Decree Law No. (51) of 2022 Regulating Nurseries

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Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Early Educational Institutions (EEI) in Abu Dhabi.

