Modernizing the early years

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Background

• 1995 Royal Commission on Learning – recommends education begin at 3 & be combined with care in schools
• 1999 – Early Years Study popularizes science of ECD and called for the rationalization of early childhood programming into Parenting and Child Development Centre
• Atkinson Charitable Foundation tested the feasibility of the integrated model of early childhood service delivery by combining kindergarten, childcare, family supports and intervention services into a single delivery hub based in schools
• Toronto First Duty is now in its 12th year and has influenced the development of Full Day Early Learning in Ontario; Child Development Centres in Atlantic Canada; Schools Plus in SK and 0-17 schools in Doveton, Australia.
Documenting the benefits

3rd phase of Toronto First Duty research found
• **Children** – improved school readiness; less draw on special education
• **Families** – less stress; felt better able to support children’s learning; more involved in school community
• **Community** – improved school/community connection
• **Educators** – less isolation; professional satisfaction; team protects against ‘schoolification’
• **System** - Integration travels with quality and cost-effectiveness
Full day kindergarten – what’s next

• FDK
  – Popular with families
  – Beneficial for children’s learning/development – Peel research
  – When combined with extended day has eliminated waitlists for out-of-school care – Waterloo
  – Economies of scale – has brought down costs for parents while improving salaries for early childhood educators

• In Sept. 2012 school boards must ensure extended day programs for families where there is sufficient demand.
• Recommend: School be required to organize programming to serve all families who request out of school care
ECE options for the under 4s

• Existing early years programs must reorganize to adapt to 4- and 5-year-olds moving to FDK
• The sky does not need to fall if the sector and public policy is ready to adapt
Recommendations

- Rationalize service management
  - Single funding formula to replace the 20 now in operation
  - Give regional managers authority to rationalize service delivery (including licensing)
  - Bring OEYCs, PFLCS and DACs under the Early Learning Division and regional oversight
Reorganizing for efficiency

• Adapt DNA to the new of reality for families
  – Two age groupings to replace the current 4
  – Infants to 24 months, maximum group size of 12 with 3 staff; 2/3rds who must have ECER qualifications (Where 3 infants are under 12 months an additional staff would be required.)
  – 25 months to kindergarten entry, maximum group size of 18 with 3 staff; 2/3rds must have ECER qualifications.

• Stabilizes programs; enhances quality; supports good staff salaries and reduces fees for parents
Enhancing quality

• Adopt ELECT as the common curriculum framework for all ECE settings
• Consider the Toronto Operating Criteria to monitor and promote quality in all ECE settings (including kindergarten classrooms)
• Develop pedagogical leadership in the ECE workforce
For more information

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