SUPPORTING ALL CHILDREN TO REACH THE MOST VULNERABLE

Report to the Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair

Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Centre/University of Toronto
Winnipeg, May 30, 2013
Experienced-based brain development

- genes
- epigenetics
- experience
- physical environment
- nurturing
- nutrition
- learning
- health
- behaviour

Life course problems related to early life

2nd Decade
- School Failure
- Teen Pregnancy
- Criminality
- Depression

3rd/4th Decade
- Obesity
- Elevated blood pressure

5th/6th Decade
- Heart disease
- Diabetes

60 + Age
- Premature aging
- Memory Loss

© Early Years Study 3
Factors affecting academic achievement – Age 11

Quality and duration matter (months of developmental age)

Developmental advantage (months)

- low-quality
- average
- high-quality

ECE program attendance

Quality linked to better outcomes

Preschool quality and self-regulation and pro-social behaviour (age 11)

Social class and pre-school on literacy (age 7)

- Pre-school
- No pre-school

Social class by occupation:
- Professional
- Skilled
- Un/semi skilled

Mean year 2 reading level:
- 2.8
- 2.6
- 2.4
- 2.2
- 2.0
- 1.8

Expected minimum

© Early Years Study
What makes a quality environment?

Five areas were particularly important:

• Quality of the adult-child verbal interaction
• Knowledge and understanding of curriculum
• Knowledge of how young children learn
• Adults skill in helping children resolve conflicts
• Helping parents to support children’s learning at home
Peer group effects

• Social mix in ECEC affects outcomes

- disadvantaged children show greater benefits when in ECEC centres that are socially mixed rather than centres with only disadvantaged children
Universal access promotes equity - *Vocabulary skills in children ages 4 and 5 years by family income*

Vocabulary skills in children ages 4 and 5 years by family income

*Number of children with ‘delayed’ vocabulary*

Long reach of ECEC
The ECE challenge

• Split governance - legislation, funding, and delivery structures – makes it challenging to deliver effective programs to children and families

• Internationally, many jurisdictions have consolidated their child care, family support and education departments at the state and local level

• Research indicates integrated delivery of early childhood and family support programs from a stable platform serves more families, more cost-effectively and in ways that they want to be served
# Policy trends in ECEC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>EC Workforce</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead ministry</td>
<td>Strategy for 0 to 8</td>
<td>EC trained</td>
<td>Have one</td>
<td>Free access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merged functions</td>
<td>Quality agenda</td>
<td>Narrow qualification gap</td>
<td>Living documents</td>
<td>Lower school age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE units with experts</td>
<td>Research/evaluation</td>
<td>Ongoing professional development</td>
<td>Align with school to support transitions</td>
<td>Ceiling on fees &amp; supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional leadership</td>
<td>Reconcile goals</td>
<td>Enhance recognition</td>
<td>Expert &amp; sector input</td>
<td>Democratic input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated funding</td>
<td>Reduce transitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC under common department/ministry</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under discussion</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common ECEC supervisory unit</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common ECEC policy framework</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common local authority for ECEC management and administration</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Under discussion</td>
<td>Under discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New approaches across Canada

• Full-day kindergarten in BC, PE, NS, NB, QC, ON, NT
• School delivered preK programs in NS, QC, MB, SK, AB, YK in selected school districts. Universal JK all 4-year olds in Ontario and Quebec.
• Ministries of education in ON & BC support school-based programs for parents and preschoolers.
New approaches across Canada

- Almost all provinces have developed curriculum frameworks for early childhood programs based on guided play - watch for NT.
- Creating a learning continuum through to grade 3
- Taken steps to raise the qualifications, compensation and professional recognition of early childhood educators
- Introduced population based assessment – Early Development Instrument
- Maintaining public reporting on investments and outcomes
Across Canada, 50% of children between ages 2 and 4 years attend an early childhood education program - up from 35% in 2004 (McCain, Mustard & McCuaig, 2011).
Spending was about $3.5-B in 2006. In 2011 increased to $7.5-B (McCain, Mustard & McCuaig, 2011)
More attention to monitoring

Figure 5.16: EDI use across Canada

- CATEGORY 1: Provincial/territorial coverage (at least once by 2011)
- CATEGORY 2: Working towards provincial/territorial coverage
- CATEGORY 3: Ongoing commitment to implementing the EDI provincially/territorially

Source: Provincial/territorial profiles www.earlyyearsstudy.ca.
Early Childhood Education Report

- Governance
- Funding
- Access
- Learning Environment
- Accountability

BC
AB
SK
MB
ON
QC
NB
NS
PE
NL

© Early Years Study
Why the school as the platform?

- Public education enjoys public confidence. Highest percentage enrolment of all the Anglo-American countries – but it is showing cracks
- Viable educations system will adapt to grow with the changing socio-economic needs– or they won’t be viable
- Facilitates the building of strong relationships between children, families, the community and the school
- Transforms schools into community learning centres rather than a place separating children from the world of adults and the wider community
The community school

• Improves communications across sectors involved with children and families

• Provides viability to small schools, particularly in rural and remote areas, where the school may be the only community resource

• Schools are in every neighbourhood – not just some – and schools often have suitable space and a supportive infrastructure that are not readily available elsewhere in the community

• Provides opportunities to create efficiencies, reduce overlaps and gaps, expand service, improve quality and accountability
What has low cost early education and care done for Quebec?

- 70,000 more mothers are working
- $1.5-billion annually in increased taxes and lower social transfers
- Boosting the GDP by $5-billion

Quebec mothers have:

- Moved Quebec from the bottom to the top in female labour force participation in Canada
- Halved child poverty rates
- Halved social assistance rates for lone parents
- Boosted fertility
- Meanwhile, Quebec student test scores have moved from below to above the national average

Done right early education and care pays for itself

For every dollar Quebec spends on ECE, it collects $1.05 in increased taxes and reduced family payments, while the federal government gets $0.44

Prevention is more effectively delivered from a universal platform

- Better Beginnings; Better Futures – began in 1991; 25-year longitudinal demonstration project to provide information on the effectiveness of prevention
- 5,000 children - eight sites – 4-8 yrs (3); 0-4 (5)
- By Grade 12, $5,000 per child savings in special education alone 4-8 yr sites, less use of health, social & justice services
- No long term savings in the under 4s
- Why? Too few resources, too broad mandate, no universal platform to operate from
Prevention is more effectively delivered from a universal platform

• Better Beginnings; Better Futures – began in 1991; 25-year longitudinal demonstration project to provide information on the effectiveness of prevention
• 5,000 children - eight sites – 4-8 yrs (3); 0-4 (5)
• By Grade 12, $5,000 per child savings in special education alone 4-8 yr sites, less use of health, social & justice services
• No long term savings in the under 4s
• Why? Too few resources, too broad mandate, no universal platform to operate from
“Research increasingly has shown the benefits of early childhood education and efforts to promote the lifelong acquisition of skills for both individuals and the economy as a whole. The payoffs of early childhood programs can be especially high.”
Public policy makes a difference

Relative poverty rates for three social risk categories
