SCHOOLS AT THE CENTRE
Findings from Case Studies Exploring Seamless Early Learning in Ontario

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The Study

• Explores impact of FDK and EDP on educators, families and early years administrators

• Three Ontario regions, four school boards

• Mixed methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups and text analysis

• Research partnership between Atkinson Centre, school boards, regional governments, community stakeholders
Policy Context

- With Our Best Future in Mind (2009)
- Amendments to *Education Act*
- Full day kindergarten (2010-2014) – 260,000 children
- FDK/EDP educator teams – created 10,000 new ECE positions
- Parent entitlement to before and after school care
- Contracted- and school board- operated extended day programs
- *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2014
Case Study: Waterloo Region

- 2009 - Licensed care available in 28 schools with 1,523 spaces
- 2014 – EDP in 80 out of 87 schools serving approximately 4,000 students
- 53 Youth Development Programs offered by community providers
- Conestoga College ECE department modeled the transition as a child care operator to serving younger children and as a training institution to supporting ECEs in FDK/EDP settings
- Centralize fee collection and registry operated by the region assists families to access services
Case Study: Halton Region

- 2009 – Two school boards – public and Catholic
- 2010 - board offered extended day in two newly built schools
- 2011 – contracted out all after school programs
- 2014 – Available in majority of schools
- SB have ‘no wait list’ policy but providers can not find qualified staff
- ‘Record number’ of programs operating with directors exemption
Case Study: Ottawa Region

• 2009 – Licensed care available in 44 schools

• 2014 – Extended Day and licensed child care in 100 out of 117 schools serving approximately 6,000 students

• To accommodate equity of service, Ottawa lowered the 12 child requirement to run an EDP to three children

• Also directly operates preschool programs
Parent Survey

- Surveys available online through the WRDSB, paper copies distributed by classroom educators

- First draw resulted in 133 parent responses
Parent Demographic

Marital Status
- Married
- Other

Country of Birth
- Canada
- Other

Home Language
- English
- Other

Employment
- Full Time
- Part Time
- Stay at Home
- Unemployed
- Student
Key Findings: Parents

Survey and focus groups examined FDK/EDP impact on:

• child and family life
• access to child care
• parents’ ability to work
Parent Satisfaction with Services

- **Child Has Benefited**
  - Agree: 80%
  - Not Sure: 10%
  - Disagree: 10%

- **Happy with Quality**
  - Agree: 70%
  - Not Sure: 20%
  - Disagree: 10%

- **FDK Helps School Readiness Socially**
  - Agree: 80%
  - Not Sure: 10%
  - Disagree: 10%

- **FDK Helps School Readiness Academically**
  - Agree: 70%
  - Not Sure: 20%
  - Disagree: 10%
Parent Satisfaction with Services

- Increased School Involvement
- Want FDK to Continue
- FDK Has Provided More Family Support
- I Support Other Child Family Services

Percentage percentages

- Agree
- Not Sure
- Disagree
Parents surveyed via the Region’s child care subsidy list – 253 respondents
Parents receiving fee subsidies and parents on subsidy wait list

- Child Care Source of Financial Stress
- Cost of Child Care Reason for not Working
- FDK affected Decision to Work

- NO
- YES
Parents receiving child care subsidies are more positive about FDK
Findings: Parent Focus Groups

- Value play based learning – recognize link between play and child development
- Child and family life less stressful due to fewer transitions
- Want additional support for family through the school – particularly families with higher needs
- Want programs for their younger children available through school
- Concerned about class sizes and the quality of food
- Some classes too structured for 3-5 year olds
- Equally divided as to whether FDK/EDP has increased or decreased parent involvement in child’s learning
• Educator survey: 530 respondents/ 20% response rate
• RECEs work school hours more frequently in Waterloo, and more morning and afternoon shifts in Ottawa. Halton is exclusively school hours
• All EDP programs in Halton delivered by community providers
**Educator Profile – 4 school boards**

- Average experience and years at board of OCTs greater than RECEs
- Significant number of RECEs have an undergraduate degree in addition to ECE diploma
Differences in the way that RECEs and OCTs view their roles in FDK Literacy, Numeracy, and Special Needs.

Educator Team Role Clarity

- Differences in the way that RECEs and OCTs view their roles in FDK Literacy, Numeracy, and Special Needs.
• Differences in the way that RECEs and OCTs view their roles in FDK
• Most RECEs’ salaries increased or stayed the same particularly in Halton, but in Waterloo and Ottawa significant numbers saw a decrease
• Benefits have increased for most RECEs
• More RECEs agree that having a union has improved their working conditions
• Almost all RECEs felt their professional status has increased or stayed the same
## Contract comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Provision</th>
<th>ETFO</th>
<th>OSSTF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope of agreement</td>
<td>DECEs and occasional DECEs</td>
<td>Special memorandum of understanding for ECEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Experience grid - $20.09 to $26.27. Supply and letter of permission - $18.54</td>
<td>Starting salary $19.48, no salary schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Time</td>
<td>Within the core hours of work</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Contract comparison

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<tr>
<td><strong>Pension Plan</strong></td>
<td>OMERS or OTPP (for RECEs with teaching credentials)</td>
<td>OMERS or OTIP for employees with 10 or more month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vacation</strong></td>
<td>Paid by-weekly based on years of service starting at 4% up to 10% after 16 years</td>
<td>15 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefit Plan</strong></td>
<td>Dental (50%), health/life/ADD up to $25,000 - 95% employer paid. LTD 100% paid by RECE</td>
<td>Health, dental, long term disability, life insurance up to $45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of times RECE is mentioned in agreement</strong></td>
<td>348 times</td>
<td>None in collective agreement. 16 in letter of agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Boards have appointed principal lead and/or ECE manager – important factor in team building

• Educator teams vary in capacity, knowledge

• Limited access to professional development and planning time difficult for ECEs — further strain on educators’ capacity to build partnership

• Children with special needs require additional support — core day EA does not extend to EDP
Key Findings: Administrators

- Implementation challenges are less significant compared to year 1
- PD opportunities for RECEs dependent on administrator flexibility and school budgets
- Role of educators are becoming clearer
- Lack of PD, program planning time for RECEs a problem across all boards
- Limited knowledge about RECEs and play-based learning
- Significant pressure to ensure literacy and numeracy success
Schools at the Centre: Partnership

Waterloo Region District School Board
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Halton District School Board
Halton Catholic District School Board
Region of Waterloo

Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
Atkinson Foundation
Lawson Foundation

Atkinson Centre, University of Toronto
School of Early Childhood, George Brown College
School of Early Childhood Studies, Ryerson University

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