



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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