

Ontario's kindergarten program: A success story ^[1]

How we all benefit from quality public full-day kindergarten

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from report foreword by Charles Coffrey

Investment in public education has long been recognized not only as a key driver of economic growth but as a powerful force in combating inequality. In today's globalized economy, which demands constant innovation and relies increasingly on the creation of new knowledge, public education is arguably the most important investment a society can make.

As someone who spent a significant part of my career in the boardrooms of leading financial institutions, I learned to recognize the importance of early childhood education and the significant impact early learning has on children's educational outcomes and ultimately on our economic output and growth. I also came to value the role early childhood education plays in reducing inequality and creating opportunities that everyone can benefit from— regardless of socioeconomic background or geographic location.

Every dollar invested in early childhood education returns upwards of six dollars to the overall economy . This return on public investment includes higher incomes and their corresponding higher tax revenues. The most important impact that investment in public education during the early years makes, however, are the positive outcomes visible over the course of a lifetime for those who participate in it. These include greater equity, healthier social adjustment and higher civic engagement.

Ontario is a global leader in early years education. Our world-renowned Kindergarten program was built by education experts working within government, academia and front-line educators and the unions that represent them. The program's success can be largely attributed to the partnership of the Kindergarten team, which underpins the program. This team, composed of a certified teacher and a designated early childhood educator, combines the expertise of two professionals to create a truly innovative learning environment. The benefits of Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten program include better outcomes in reading, writing, numeracy, self-regulation and social skills.

In this report, Dr. Gordon Cleveland, Emeritus Associate Professor of Economics Emeritus at the University of Toronto, has performed an extensive review of the existing body of research into Kindergarten and early years education. By looking at the evidence, he provides a comprehensive analysis to inform policy decisions regarding this important program. The conclusions of this report provide a compelling case for maintaining and investing in the Kindergarten model we have now.

It is no secret that over the past two years the provincial government considered changes to Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten with the objective of saving money. While ultimately the government did not implement those damaging changes to Kindergarten, this report clearly outlines why it would be a grave mistake for future governments to consider doing so. Due to the positive, long-term economic impact of this program, it would ultimately cost much more than it would save to alter its existing structure or model.

Policy makers will find evidence to support additional investment in Ontario's Kindergarten program in this report. They will also find that Ontario's Kindergarten program, based on the unique partnership between a certified teacher and an early childhood educator, is an efficiently run program, as well as the model for other jurisdictions to follow nationally and internationally.

By investing in public education, and in particular in Ontario's Kindergarten program, the government can support economic growth, help address inequality, provide opportunities to all regardless of socioeconomic background, and continue to improve outcomes for all students.

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