

Kelowna school tests seamless childcare pilot project ^[1]

After-school care provided under evolving provincial childcare mandate

Author: Gerding, Barry

Source: Kelowna Capital News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Apr 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

A Kelowna elementary school is participating in a provincial pilot project for after-school care in kindergarten classrooms.

Bankhead Elementary was volunteered as a pilot test site for the ministry of education last fall, and after considerable red tape and childcare licensing protocols set out by Interior Health were signed off on, the school was able to get the Seamless Day Kindergarten program up and running in January with a licensed capacity enrolment of 12 students.

The after-school aspect of the program runs from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., at a cost of \$203/month for parents.

Jamie Robinson, assistant superintendent for Okanagan Public Schools, said it follows the 10-year ChildCare BC plan mandate set out by the provincial government.

That plan directed the ministry of education to take over provincial childcare responsibilities from the ministry of children and family development, and to use schools as a facilitator for hosting before- and after-school care programs.

The government has stated its intent is to provide an affordable childcare option for parents, with schools providing a seamless option where kids can transition from school classes to childcare programs without leaving the facility, a convenient and cost-effective option for parents.

Robinson said the pilot project began in 2019 with four schools and has since expanded to 21.

Childcare educators are in place to assist kindergarten students in the classroom during the day, and then take over from teachers overseeing either the before- or after-school programs, which is seen as a blending of resources to serve complementary needs.

Robinson said the initial feedback from participating parents has been positive about the program, citing two examples presented to school trustees at the Central Okanagan Board of Education meeting Wednesday (April 13).

"This is the first of its kind program in the Central Okanagan and a unique opportunity," Robinson told the board.

He said the immediate benefits have been children being cared for, the seamless nature for staff and students, and fulfilling the mandate set out by the ministry of education.

But Robinson noted there are still challenges to scaling up the program to more schools, such as working through the challenges of licensing and administration, and a sector-wide shortage of qualified childhood educators.

At least two childcare educators are needed to cover the demands of a before- and after-school childcare program.

There are currently 20 after-school programs offered by private entities using school district facilities, with another seven coming in the 2022-23 school year.

The Okanagan Boys and Girls Club is the largest single operator of those programs with eight in Kelowna and West Kelowna.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: after school ^[4]
kindergarten ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 20 Apr 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/04/kelowna-school-tests-seamless-childcare-pilot-project>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/04/kelowna-school-tests-seamless-childcare-pilot-project> [2] <https://www.kelownacapnews.com/news/kelowna-school-tests-seamless-childcare-pilot-project/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9249> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/kindergarten>