

Innovation needs money [CA-ON] ^[1]

Editorial

Author: Toronto Star

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 6 Sep 2008

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

A widely lauded pilot project at Toronto's Bruce Jr. Public School, which integrates affordable child care, kindergarten and other supports, has hit a roadblock.

The project &em; known as Toronto First Duty &em; was part of a five-year partnership between the City of Toronto, the Toronto public school board and community agencies.

But as the Star's Laurie Monsebraaten reported yesterday, it has run out of funding. Operating and research grants from the city ended in 2006, while operating funding from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (established by former Toronto Star publisher Joseph Atkinson) stopped in June.

The project's integrated teaching model will continue. But many parents now have to pay a lot more for their children to attend. That has forced some families to cut the amount of time their children spend there, or withdraw altogether. It has also reduced flexible part-time and half-day options that appealed to many parents.

A spokesperson for the Atkinson Charitable Foundation says that, while the charity sympathizes with upset parents, it cannot fund the pilot project indefinitely.

But surely there are other options that would allow the project to continue in its original form. Premier Dalton McGuinty has promised to introduce full-day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds starting in 2010. Until then, why can't his government fund a highly successful program that could serve as a model for the province's future plans?

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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