

Toddlers not expelled here - but they could be: experts [CA-MB]

[1]

Life

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EXCERPTS

A Yale University study released last week showing thousands of American three-and-four-year-olds being expelled from pre-kindergarten classes each year cites the same behaviour problems plaguing Manitoba educators.

Manitoba schools and day cares don't expel children with behaviour problems -- but the problem is real, Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, said Thursday.

Day-care centres don't have enough staff, training, or resources to deal with behaviour problems, Wege said.

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"Behaviour is a problem. It's the number one cited issue," Wege said. "A universal truth is the lack of help available for preschool children.

"It's a systemic problem," Wege said. "I don't think it's getting the attention it deserves as a growing problem. It's not just the children -- you have to work with the families.

"We're not set up for that at all," Wege said.

Yale University's Edward Zigler Centre in Child Development and Social Policy released a report Thursday that found that prekindergarten programs in the U.S. expel children at a rate three times as high as the kindergarten to Grade 12 system.

The data include public and private school programs, and public and for-profit day care centres and nursery programs.

Manitoba's child care centres don't use the word 'expel', but they may look at alternate arrangements if a situation just isn't working, Wege said.

"It's not unheard of -- it happens," said Wege.

Kathy Reid, director of the Manitoba child care program, said the province spends \$10 million annually on support services for preschool children, but could not say how that compares to what public schools have available for special needs kids.

"Meeting children's needs would be the first reason you would look at alternate spots for them," Reid said.

The child special services program can provide teams of professionals to work with preschool kids, Reid said. There are child development counsellors, therapists, and staff from the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre available.

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Winnipeg School Division officials said the division rarely expels a student at any level, and cannot recall having permanently removed a child from the nursery program.

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What Yale study found

The U.S. expels 6.7 out of every 1,000 three-and-four-year-olds enrolled in prekindergarten programs, compared to 2.1 per 1,000 in the kindergarten to Grade 12 system.

* New Mexico expels 21.1 of every 1,000 children enrolled in prekindergarten. That's the U.S. high.

* States range from no expulsions in Kentucky, up to 14.73 per 1,000 kids in Maine and 14.12 in Alabama.

* Public school and state-sponsored child care programs were less likely to expel children than were faith-based institutions and for-profit child care centres, Yale said.

- * Schools with resources available expelled at much lower rates.
- * The higher the children-to-staff ratio, the more likely expulsions will occur.
- * Boys are expelled 4.5 times as often as girls.
- * Minnesota expels 3.41 of every 1,000 prekindergarten kids, and 0.76 of every 1,000 school students.
- * North Dakota did not report its prekindergarten numbers, but expels 0.56 of every 1,000 K-12 students.

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Region: Manitoba ^[2]

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