A push for one-stop childhood services 11

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Source: Toronto Star **Format:** Article

Publication Date: 25 Mar 2006

AVAILABILITY See text below.

EXCERPTS Parents become more empowered to play a greater role in their children's education when child care, parenting support and kindergarten are blended into a single program, an innovative pilot project in Toronto has found. The finding is significant because parental involvement is considered a critical factor in children's school success, a forum on Toronto's First Duty project was told yesterday. The project also shows that a one-stop shopping model for early childhood services reaches a broader cross-section of families than standalone programs. "The exciting finding is that these programs are not just serving the clever middle class," said University of Toronto child development expert Carl Corter, the project's lead researcher. "These sites are reaching out across the community and are representative of the populations they serve." Over time, children participating in the programs gained social and emotional maturity and were considered more ready for school as a result of their experiences, Corter added during a presentation of the project's initial findings. Costeffectiveness and more detailed analysis of participation levels will be released later this spring when Corter's report is complete. ... Under the project, early learning, parenting and care activities are planned and delivered by a team of kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators, family support workers and teaching assistants while meeting provincial education and daycare regulations. Space and resources are shared. Parents are encouraged to participate with their child for as much of the program as they choose. They can enrol their child for half of the day for free, or pay a minimal cost for a full or extended day. ... - reprinted from the Toronto Star

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