

# Rural kids to get a 'head start': Lambton, Kent part of new plan <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Some local children will be getting a head start on their education.

As part of the provincial government's Best Start Plan -- which will provide more access to child care and early-learning opportunities for young children -- the rural areas of Lambton/Kent have been chosen as one of program's three model sites.

This means the program will be accelerated locally, being fully implemented within three to four years, as opposed to 10 years province-wide.

These areas will receive about \$10 million in funding each year to support this initiative, said Margaret Nelson, director of education for the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, a partner in this effort -- along with the Lambton Kent District School Board.

She said these programs, which will focus on health as well as education and child care, will significantly help prepare local children for Grade 1.

"The concept behind it is that children who have enriched learning opportunities when they're very young are more ready to have success when they are in the formal school system."

Plan highlights include more child care spaces for children in junior and senior kindergarten, resulting in five full days of learning and child care per week. There will also be more child care subsidies to make it more affordable for families.

The number of health screening programs for young children will also be increased and hearing, speech and language programs will be enhanced.

- reprinted from the Chatham Daily News

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