

Good child care and education are linked [CA-ON] ^[1]

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Source: Ottawa Citizen

Format: Article

Publication Date: 14 Oct 2002

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

Letter to the Editor, The Ottawa Citizen, October 14, 2002.

Re: Let families care for kids, Oct. 1.

The Citizen's editorial conveys some strange and misinformed ideas. For instance, it suggests that child care doesn't belong in an education platform. However, the idea that high-quality child care should be part of education isn't solely Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGinty's. On this, he's in good company with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Union, the United Nations as well as the French, Belgians, Swedes or Danes. Closer to home, there's the Ontario New Democratic Party, the Quebec government and even the federal throne speech which talked about "early learning and quality child care."

The reworking of "care" and education that occurred long ago in most countries is overdue in Canada.

And the idealized situation where trusted neighbours care for one's children on a regular basis for a small amount of money (I guess a pittance is fine for traditional women's work) is rarely available. Actually, most "informal" child-care arrangements are business relationships where parents try to get the best care they can and the caregiver tries to earn a living.

The suggestion that unregulated child care is equivalent to early childhood education and care just doesn't hold up. There is plentiful, credible research on the relationship between the quality of child care and its predictors -- early childhood education training in a post-secondary program, good regulation, government funding -- and good "educational" outcomes for children. This is not to suggest that the editorial writer shouldn't have his friends and neighbours take care of his children if that's preferred.

Martha Friendly, Toronto

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-Reprinted from The Ottawa Citizen

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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