

Barack Obama offers framing lessons: Fight for public and early childhood education calls for winning language [CA] ^[1]

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Source: Straight Goods

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 Feb 2009

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Barack Obama came to Canada last week, and the example he set here should serve as a reminder to us of the importance of framing.

He framed Canada as a partner to work with rather than conquer or hector. He framed dirty energy from the tar sands and coal as a problem that needs fixing. He turned the tables on Stephen Harper, who has spent a career undermining labour and environmental rights.

Obama established these issues, in one line of their joint news conference, as a non-debatable basis for sustainable international agreements.

We have much to learn from Obama's use of framing as a way to promote awareness.

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Two expressions progressive educators should seek to eliminate from their vocabularies are "daycare" and "childcare." Early childhood education in Canada took a big step backwards with the election with the election in 2006 of Stephen Harper.

The strain is starting to show. As many as 25,000 subsidized licensed child spaces are in danger of closing this year. With this level of danger, how the argument is framed is crucial. Although public education frequently comes under attack, the fight for it has largely been won in Canada.

The fight for childcare has not, at least outside Quebec. Anglo-Canadians, with their more old-fashioned, colonial attitudes, do not feel the same level of obligation to help other people raise their kids as Quebecers do.

"Care" is almost like "storage." No one wants to subsidize child storage. And while child storage may have motivated the first wave of "daycares" in the 70s, the profession has moved far beyond that.

Education is the main activity that takes place in licensed child daycare centres today. Researchers have demonstrated the crucial importance of stimulating child learning in the earliest years in all-important areas, including the 3Rs, the arts, athletics and language.

Early childhood educators have applied these findings in their daily work. The result is kids moving a giant step ahead up the ladder to educational and career achievement.

That's what goes on in my two year-old granddaughter's "daycare." The kids listen to reading and learn about letters. They learn songs and dances. They learn to socialize. Every week when I see her, she's learned new games, new language and new skills. What part of this isn't learning?

Instead of calling it childcare, let's call it what it is — early childhood education. Early childhood education takes the children of poor families and places them on a track that can lead to upward economic mobility.

As George Lakoff says, and we all need to learn to say repeatedly, education is an economic generator. Barack Obama serves as a shining model, and the battle for public education is a very good place to apply that model. If we want schools that work, we must frame our vision, our language and our arguments.

- reprinted from Straight Goods

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: advocacy ^[3]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/09/02/barack-obama-offers-framing-lessons-fight-public-and-early-childhood> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy>