

Full-day combo earns top grade [CA-ON] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A proposal to combine day care and kindergarten into a full-day program in all Ontario schools is already being done at one London school -- with great success, officials say.

"Kids who were struggling at the beginning of the year are thriving now," said Diane Gordon, executive-director of the White Hills Childcare Association, which started a pilot project at Wilfrid Jury public school last September.

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There are 20 kids enrolled in the Wilfrid Jury pilot project, Gordon said. They go to kindergarten in the morning with a teacher, then an early childhood educator comes in for the day-care portion -- in the same classroom -- in the afternoon.

"The teacher and early childhood educators (ECE) really work together. The kindergarten teacher does the report cards and the ECE person does the day care reports. It's a partnership," Gordon said.

"The kids have consistent learning throughout the day. They stay with their friends and the only thing that changes is the adults that are in the classroom."

In 1990, the NDP government of the day required day cares be attached to any new schools built, so kids at Wilfrid Jury used to be walked between the two spaces. Now they stay put.

"Parents are thrilled with the program," Gordon said of the only program of its kind in the Thames Valley District school board system.

Pascal's proposals are "exciting," said Thames Valley education director Bill Tucker, adding there are four schools in the city that have day cares attached and could convert easily to the new model in 2010.

"This is completely in line with where we'd like to go as a school board," he said.

In addition to the Wilfrid Jury program, three schools -- Lorne Avenue, White Oaks and Northbrae public schools -- would be equipped for the new protocol, Tucker said.

Other schools in the board system have empty classrooms that could be converted into day cares, he added.

- reprinted from the London Free Press

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