

Childcare is key. Good parents are, too [CA] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Being a parent has always been about being judged. Way back before any so-called Mommy Wars, there were neighbours and relatives clucking about your child's atrocious manners or the fact you spoiled your kids. Or even occasionally lost track of them.

Now, of course, much of the judgment is ideologically fixated on childcare arrangements, as if everything you need to know about the quality of a child's life is revealed by whether her mother works outside the home.

Some social conservatives wistfully want to return to the land of the child-focused stay-at-home mom.

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Others say that both mothers and children are happier when mom has an "outlet," which often turns into a punishing 9-to-5 (or more) job and an exhausted and stressed parent.

Even contemplating those two stereotypical polarities is a waste of time. The truth is that economic realities have resulted in more Canadian women being in the work force than ever before. So the real question about what's best for our kids has to take in that immutable reality: Women work.

Still, the debate about whether our children are suffering the consequences of this dual working-parent world is legitimate. Are they safe? Emotionally secure? Intellectually thriving?

We need to keep finding new ways to make sure they have the attention, stimulation and emotional security they need to grow into healthy and productive adults and not just hark back to the old ways. For that reason I like the new Ontario government proposal for optional full-day kindergarten.

Many young children would thrive in that kind of stimulating environment. For those who would be overwhelmed, their parents could make other arrangements that suit their finances and family dynamic.

Many parents who now cobble together a complex web of childcare, including babysitters, daycare and family members, would breathe a sigh of relief knowing they have a one-stop, full-day option.

In the best possible scenario, children with learning disabilities would be identified sooner, and those who are more vulnerable at home would have a safe environment in which to play under the supervision of high-quality teachers trained in early childhood development.

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[Early Learning Advisor Charles Pascal has] pointed out that a large percentage of mothers in France who send their kids to full-day kindergarten are stay-at-home moms. To some, it seems shocking that a school environment, no matter how qualified its early childhood educators are, could replace those halcyon days at home for four- and five-year-olds, who should be building tree forts in the back yard and hanging with mom.

But those halcyon days have to be re-jigged. How about sending the kids to full-day kindergarten but being able to leave work, pick them up at 3:30 and build a tree fort with them?

Of course, that would require employers to "re-jig" too, and that's a whole other assault on the status quo.

- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: kindergarten ^[3]

full-day early learning ^[4]

Links

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