

With our best future in mind: Implementing early learning in Ontario ^[1]

A Report to the Premier from the Special Advisor on Early Learning

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Source: Ontario.ca

Format: Report

Publication Date: 15 Jun 2009

AVAILABILITY

Report in pdf ^[2]

- Early Learning Advisor's website ^[3]

Excerpts from the summary:

Four Key Components of Early Learning

This new, comprehensive and transformational early learning plan for Ontario begins by recommending better use of the resources we have to create a system of services for children and families from the prenatal period to age 12, including the following:

1. FULL-DAY LEARNING FOR 4- AND 5-YEAR-OLDS

Children who attend full-day early learning programs have improved academic performance and social success when they enter Grade 1. To help students succeed, the plan recommends that:

- * school boards offer full-day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds starting in September 2010, and that it be available province-wide within three years;
- * parents have a choice about their child's participation, including the option of full-day or half-day attendance
- * fee-based programming (before and after traditional school hours and during the summer holidays) be offered at the request of 15 or more families;
- * programs be staffed by well-trained teams of teachers and early childhood educators working with an established, consistent curriculum and approach to learning.

The report recommends that the first phase of implementation include lower-income neighbourhoods as part of the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

2. BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Quality before- and after-school and summer programming has been found to bolster academic success, particularly for disadvantaged children. The report recommends that new investments for full-day learning and the consolidation and reorganization of existing resources will allow schools to offer extended day and year-round programs for school-age children (6 to 12 years old) at the request of 15 or more families.

Adequately staffed by appropriately trained school board employees, these programs will offer homework help and recreational and other activities to enhance children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

To meet the needs of older students (9 to 12 years old), school boards may contract with municipal recreation programs or community agencies to provide activities.

Programs operating before and after school and in the summer would be funded by parent fees, and subsidies for low-income families would be available.

Integrating early learning into a single program would result in significant savings for parents compared with the cost of traditional licensed child care for 4- to 12-year-olds.

Full day learning is associated with improved reading and numeracy, smoother transitions to Grade 1, and increased post-secondary graduation rates.

3. QUALITY PROGRAMS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

To support children and families during the earliest years of development, the report recommends that:

- * the many existing child and family programs be consolidated into a network of Best Start Child and Family Centres under the systems management of municipalities;
- * the Centres be located in or partnered with schools, and provide flexible full-day, full-year, and part-time child care for children up to age 4 (supported by parent fees and subsidies available for low-income families);
- * the Centres be a one-stop opportunity for pre- and postnatal supports, parenting resources and programs, playgroups, linkages to community resources, help with early identification and intervention for children with special needs, and other early learning services.

Changes to child care fee subsidy eligibility will open participation to more children.

4. ENHANCED PARENTAL LEAVE BY 2020

Enabling parents to spend more time with their new baby creates a strong foundation for the child and decreases the need for expensive infant care. The report recommends that an improved parental leave and benefits program be established by 2020, and include:

- * paid parental leave of 400 days after the birth or adoption of a child;
- * six weeks of leave designated exclusively for the father or non-birthing parent;
- * expanded coverage to include self-employed parents;
- * flexibility for parents on leave to return to work part-time;
- * 10 days of legislated job-protected leave annually for parents of children under 12.

Tags: kindergarten ^[4]

full-day early learning ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/09/06/our-best-future-mind-implementing-early-learning-ontario>

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