

Letter from Premier McGuinty re: full day early learning ^[1]

Response to the 130 signers of letter urging full implementation of the Pascal report

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I am delighted to announce that Ontario is moving forward with an extended and integrated full-day early learning program for our province's four- and five-year olds. By giving our kids an early full-day start in school, we are putting them on the road to success and building a stronger Ontario for all citizens. This is the right thing to do for our youngest students, their parents - and for the long-term prosperity of our province.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your advocacy on behalf of Ontario's youngest. Your September 22 open letter endorsing Dr. Pascal's report was much appreciated and carefully considered as we developed our early learning policy. Like you, I believe that Dr. Pascal's report sets out an exciting future for early learning in Ontario and offers sound advice on transforming our education and child care systems.

Our government is now ready to take the first step toward realizing Dr. Pascal's vision. In September 2010, we will start phasing in extended full-day early learning opportunities for four- and five-year olds. Students participating in the program - part of our wider efforts to improve the education of children up to 12 - will learn, play and grow under the guidance of a teacher and an early childhood educator. For a reasonable fee, parents will be able to enrol their four- and five-year olds in integrated and extended programs available before and after regular school hours. In addition, Ontario will call on its community partners to plan and develop before- and after-school programs for six- to twelve-year olds where there is sufficient parent demand.

Municipalities and school boards are among our vital allies as we work to implement full-day learning. To this end, the government will be collaborating with our province's municipalities to develop and implement full-day learning for four- and five-year olds and to enhance and stabilize existing child care programs. Full-day learning for four- and five-year olds also provides an opportunity to create a comprehensive service system for younger children and their families.

In acting on another of Dr. Pascal's recommendations, the Ministry of Education will establish an Early Years Division, mandating it to develop a planning and policy framework that articulates a coherent vision for the education of, and supports for, children from zero to 12 years of age.

Early learning remains a top priority for our government even in these challenging economic times. We have had to make important choices over the past year. We have chosen to continue implementing early learning because we believe it is vitally important to invest in the future of our province's children. And we have not wavered in our commitment to invest \$200 million in 2010-11 and \$300 million in 2011-12 in early learning - a commitment that was made in 2007 when the economy was much stronger.

We need to launch early learning in a manner that is both fiscally responsible and reflective of a commitment to quality. The program will be available to up to about 35,000 students in September 2010, and our goal is to have full-day early learning fully implemented by 2015-16. This timeline will ensure that resources are not overstretched, and that school boards and local governments have sufficient time to hire staff, build facilities and work with local partners.

I have the utmost respect for your experience, skills and your commitment to the children of Ontario, and would welcome your support and guidance as we work to make this ambitious initiative a success. I am confident that, through the collaborative efforts of teachers, early childhood educators, school boards, municipal governments, community members and parents, we can provide our four- and five-year-olds with the highest quality education and care. Please accept my best wishes and warm regards.

Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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