

Full-day classes for kindergarten are a nightmare ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

For many weeks I have considered penning this letter. As a retired teacher, I'm wondering how much thought went into the planning the all-day junior kindergarten (JK) and senior kindergarten (SK).

I have been helping a former colleague one day a week since school started. The class consists of 26 JK children, including two Down syndrome, and two severe behavioural children. All four of these children need one/one to function within the setting. Yes, the class has two adults but the early childhood educator has never had any classroom experience until now. Those four children take a disproportionate amount of the adults' time, which is to be expected. However if your child is one of the others you can see that the reverse is true.

Did the Ontario Ministry of Education, in setting its guidelines, plan for half the class not reaching four until Dec. 31? Very young children who have, for the most part, never been exposed to the rules, and necessary behaviour required in a classroom even for a half day program.

Did the education administrators plan on the logistics of providing adequate supervision for snacks, toileting, lunch and outdoor play? When are the two teachers to get their lunch because, if anything, the children need extra supervision washing up, eating and getting ready for an outdoor play time?

Did the educators look into the logistics of outdoor play supervision when there is a constant parade to the washroom at that age? One adult stays behind, one travels to the washroom. What if there was an emergency during this time?

Did the ministry or school boards provide supply lists of ECEs or other personnel during an absence of staff?

Did the education administrators consider how a group of 26 allocated to a room for 15 to 16 children have enough play area?

Did they address the fact that some of the children require a rest while others may not?

No extra space or quiet area is provided. Did they consider how tired, cranky and unable to cope the younger members of the class become as both the day and week wear on?

What I've seen even with the excellent program being provided in spite of all this is a nightmare for both the staff and children who are not being served adequately.

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-reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

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