Full assessment of kindergarten students promised for fall 2012

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EXCERPTS

Kindergarten children in B.C. public schools will be routinely assessed for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development starting in fall 2012, Education Minister George Abbott promised today.

Such early assessments are intended to help students reach their full potential, Abbott states in a letter to boards of education.

In preparation, the ministry will begin gathering information this fall from boards that already offer some assessment of kindergarten students to determine which practices are working well.

"Many districts or schools have already put considerable efforts into making sure that each kindergarten child has been assessed and provided with appropriate learning experiences that support their unique learning and development needs," the minister writes.

"We want to strengthen and broaden these effective practices."

The move corresponds with the expansion of full-day, play-based kindergarten into every public school this fall. This year, full-day kindergarten was offered in half of B.C. schools.

"We are confident that full-day kindergarten will be successful in enhancing student achievement over time," Abbott says. "A longer kindergarten day allows teachers more time to foster children's learning and development."

Advocates for children with learning disabilities such as dyslexia have been calling for universal screening to identify learning disabilities for many years. Gordon Campbell pledged to introduce such screening before he resigned as premier, but Abbott is promising a broader assessment of children's development.

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