

Board needs to OK hybrid care model: Parents hope to work with trustees to nail down day-care details ^[1]

Author: Pearson, Matthew

Source: Ottawa Citizen

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Oct 2011

EXCERPTS:

A recommendation for Ottawa's public school board to work with third-party child care providers may look like a victory on paper, but some now say the devil is in the details.

After months of discussion and three public consultation meetings, board staff - in a report released Friday - say the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board should proceed with a hybrid model.

That means the OCDSB would operate the extended day program in schools where no program currently exists and, where there is a school-based child care program already in place, the current provider would be given the chance to partner with the OCDSB to offer the program.

Senior OCDSB staff members previously suggested their preference would be a board-run model - in keeping with what Charles Pascal outlined in his vision for Ontario's full-day kindergarten program.

But, in recent months, parents from across the city have banded together to vocally defend not-for-profit child care operators that have run similar before-and after-school programs in many Ottawa public schools for years.

Convincing OCDSB staff to recommend the hybrid model was the first hurdle. The next is getting a majority of trustees onside.

After that, the big challenge will be working out the details of the various partnerships with third-party providers and addressing key issues, such as cost, programming and space.

Calling the recommendation a step forward, parent Allison Seymour said Sunday the OCDSB now needs to meet with stakeholders to hammer out a solution that works for everyone.

"I think it's just a great opportunity to finally get to the table to have those discussions with the (board) staff and start to work toward a solution that will fit for the community," she said.

Trustee Mark Fisher agreed, adding the next challenge for the OCDSB will be drawing up a framework for sustainable partnerships with outside agencies.

"I want this to be a two-way partnership," he said. "I don't want the board just setting terms that are so restrictive or constraining that it will be virtually impossible for any partnership to flourish."

Fisher suggested one way to accomplish that goal might be to strike an advisory committee made up of OCDSB staff, child care workers and parents.

The fee structure will also have to be addressed. Will the OCDSB set a standard rate or will individual programs be allowed to continue setting their prices?

Parents have already complained that the board is charging more for its extended day program - \$20 per school day and \$32 for PD days and holidays - than some outside agencies, which charge as little as \$15 all year long, including throughout the summer. The staff report notes year-long care - which the OCDSB hasn't offered thus far - is a "paramount concern" for families.

Another concern revolves around what will happen if the OCDSB surveys parents and finds demand for the extended day program at a specific school exceeds the number of licensed spaces that established third-party operators can provide.

- reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: kindergarten ^[3]

full-day early learning ^[4]

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/10/board-needs-ok-hybrid-care-model-parents-hope-work-trustees-nail> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/kindergarten> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8149>