

Early schooling is a good thing ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

I'm always surprised by the reaction some people have to the province's ongoing efforts to implement early learning programs for pre-kindergarten children.

The latest uproar came after a story I recently wrote about a nationwide report "The Early Years Study," that recommends in-school programs for children as young as two should be set up to "maximize their development."

I was immediately deluged with phone calls and e-mails from concerned parents who said that they were adamantly opposed to having their two-year-old children subjected to institutionalized classroom settings.

Many of the parents told me that they firmly believe their kids should spend their formative early years learning from them and their loved ones before they enter the sometimes scary and intimidating world of public education.

But parents should be aware that we're not talking about having children who are barely diaper-trained taking instruction from a teacher in front of a classroom for six hours each day.

The focus of all the new educational initiatives in B.C. and across Canada for young learners is to begin their learning in very informal settings using "guided play" as the means to subtly educate children. The reason that the Liberal government introduced the controversial and expensive full-day kindergarten in B.C. over the last two years was in response to studies that show children under the age of five are at an ideal age to begin learning.

According to some experts, knowledge gained in their early years can influence a child's entire life.

In Nanaimo-Ladysmith, considered to be one of the poorest school districts in the province, efforts to begin educating kids as early as possible should be particularly embraced.

According to a study conducted by the University of B.C. last year, nearly half of all students entering kindergarten in some neighbourhoods in Nanaimo-Ladysmith are not adequately prepared for school.

It's a fact that many parents in the district can't afford the money to send their kids to daycare programs with certified early learning teachers, or the time to take them to the district's StrongStart programs which helps pre-schoolers prepare for their formal educations with the assistance of their parents.

If parents in Nanaimo-Ladysmith really want to add constructive voices and opinions on the issue, my advice would be to direct them at the government and ask for the resources that will be needed to establish early-learning centres that will be partially or wholly subsidized by Victoria.

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full-day early learning ^[4]

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