

Don't cut all-day kindergarten, parents and educators say ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Megan Vanderlee hopes all three of her children have the opportunity to attend full-day kindergarten.

The Virgil mother said her five-year-old son, John, currently spends full days in class at St. Michael's School and loves it.

Not only is he having fun, he's learning, she said.

"His reading skills are phenomenal," she said. "It blows my mind every time he reads."

A QMI Agency report said the provincial government's full-day kindergarten program will be on the chopping block when Don Drummond releases results of his study Wednesday on how to wrestle down Ontario's \$16-billion deficit and \$200-billion accumulated debt.

"It would be a shame to go backwards," Vanderlee said.

She said her four-year-old son, Sam, attends junior kindergarten on Tuesdays, Thursdays and every other Friday.

"Sam wishes he could go every day with his brother," she said, noting she plans to eventually enrol Sam and eventually her daughter Claire, 2, in all-day kindergarten.

While being in school full-time was a little overwhelming at first, she said John has adapted well.

"It's such a great environment," she said. "You see progress every day."

Port Colborne mother Carol Moroziuk's children are past kindergarten now, but she saw the benefit of a full day when her daughter, Peyton, attended. Her son, Gabriel, was already out of kindergarten when the government introduced the program in 2010.

"It was a big difference," she said. "They are reading at a Grade 1 level when they come out of all-day kindergarten."

District School Board of Niagara spokesman Brett Sweeney said 16 schools currently offer the program and 21 more will be coming on board next year.

"We're very much committed to the implementation" of full-day kindergarten, he said. "Families have told us very clearly that this is something they want."

Niagara Catholic District School Board education director John Crocco said 10 schools offer the program and 11 more will add it in the fall.

He said the benefits of full-day learning for kindergarteners are endless, from literacy and numeracy to physical education and the arts.

"It does strengthen their social, educational and spiritual development," he said.

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

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