

Gettin' dirty: MLA rolls up his sleeves to become early childcare educator for a day ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Fewer temper tantrums and better behaviour.

In other words, a change of pace from the Alberta Legislature as MLA Blake Pedersen spent Thursday working as an early childhood educator in the Gas City.

"We'd really like to thank Pedersen for taking part in this project," said Jennifer Usher, chairperson for the Medicine Hat Early Childhood Coalition. "We're really excited to see him get his hands dirty and meet the childcare providers."

The idea behind the experience was to have a public figure become an ECE for a day to get an idea of what the job entails in the various childhood centres, she said.

Throughout the day, Pedersen visited the wide range of childcare options and facilities in the city - starting off at Apple Blossom Day Home, to KidsPlay Preschool, Medicine Hat Community Preschool and finally wrapping up his day at the CAPE School Out of School Care.

Pedersen made play-dough, led crafts, sang songs, danced, popped popcorn - all while talking with local childcare providers about the issues that matter to them.

"The whole day was great," said Pedersen, who admitted he had no idea what to expect at first. It was interesting to see the different service providers, the different methodologies and ways to teach and interact with children, from play-dough to iPads - and the variety of childcare services available in the community.

"It's just amazing how dedicated the staff are to their jobs - it's not one of the glamorous jobs out there," he said, despite it being an important one.

One concern raised by providers was the impact of funding cuts with the provincial budget, Pedersen said not knowing what programs will be impacted, which will continue and what new programs there could be.

As well, limited spaces was an issue that was raised, he said.

"Obviously the demand is outstripping the supply, and that has to be addressed on many levels," he said.

As part of ECE Appreciation events, a mayoral proclamation will also be signed May 10 at 10 a.m. at the Clock Tower by the City Hall.

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