

Seeing the future: An answer to questions of integration ^[1]

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Report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

In preparation for the Integration Network Symposium, which took place on November 3-4, 2005 in Toronto, the Integration Network Project advisory group prepared a visionary piece that takes a provocative look at a reformed system for early learning and care of our youngest children.

Excerpts from the vision paper:

Let's first imagine the year is 2010. The Early Learning and Child Care system has been revolutionized across the country and enjoys high levels of public support. How did we get there and what would this mean for young children and their families?

Imagine that this fundamental change began in 2005 when policymakers questioned the foundations of the current systems. Early learning and child care in Canada was still deeply rooted in the split systems of "Education" and "Social Services" (or welfare). Attention to growing child poverty, apparent increase in violence, high drop-out rates and an increased focus on high levels of achievement for all students particularly those who do not do well in school precipitated a momentous public discourse about how to change the system to give children the best foundation for learning throughout their lives. Earlier, the federal government released a major report to launch an invigorating national dialogue on the future of Early Learning and Child Care in Canada in the context of lifelong learning. A broad discussion across Canada produced consensus about far-reaching recommendations for the system of Early Learning and Child Care for children aged 0-6 years.

The key recommendation involved a transformation from current arrangements to a system characterized by both vertical and horizontal integration between child care and formal schooling. During the dialogue, the public embraced the concept of a system of lifelong learning from birth to adulthood in which the "child" became the focus of the institutions that served him or her. Learning and care were understood as interrelated and inseparable within an "integrative" approach. A focus on the full development of the child requires programs that support activities where care, nurturing and education form a coherent whole.

Related link: Integration for a change: How can integration of services for kindergarten-aged children be achieved? ^[3]

Region: Canada ^[4]

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