

Extended day program numbers low in low-income neighbourhoods ^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Dec 2013

EXCERPTS

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board trustees say many children from low-income families are being shut out of before-school and after-school care, and they're asking the province to make changes.

Extended care was introduced at the same time as full-day kindergarten three years ago. The program accepts children up to the age of 12 and it costs \$20 per day, per child.

Of the 52 schools where the board offers extended care, some schools in more affluent neighbourhoods have 250 children enrolled.

But in several high-needs schools, the numbers are much lower. In others, the program can't be offered because not enough people sign up.

"What we noticed was, the intake for extended day in our higher-needs neighbourhoods was quite low, and we saw many schools that couldn't even offer the program in their schools because they didn't have enough registrants," said board of trustees chair Jennifer McKenzie.

The school board has since lowered the required number of registrants to just three.

"For me, public education is something that's supposed to level the playing field, and what we're doing here is we're making the playing field less level because we're allowing parents in middle and high-income families access to a program which is not accessible to low-income families."

The government does offer subsidies to people in financial need who meet a certain income threshold, but the waiting list is long, McKenzie said.

And even though the OCDSB's extended day program has a \$200,000 surplus, the surplus can't be used to address the problem.

"One of the frustrations is that we can't use that surplus to address this problem which clearly has very high need," McKenzie said.

Trustees have written a letter to education minister Liz Sandals and education critics at Queen's Park, asking for more flexibility in the Education Act to allow local boards to come up with "creative solutions."

One example would be to maximize student-to-teacher ratios in small extended day programs, allowing low-income students from the subsidy waiting list into the programs at reduced rates or no cost at all.

- reprinted from CBC News

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: kindergarten ^[3]

full-day early learning ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/extended-day-program-numbers-low-low-income-neighbourhoods>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/extended-day-program-numbers-low-low-income-neighbourhoods> [2]

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

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