

Schools at the centre: Findings from case studies exploring seamless early learning in Ontario ^[1]

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Format: Report

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Description

The Schools at the Centre study explores the impact of full day kindergarten and extended hours programming on educators, families and early years administrators in three Ontario regions. By exploring the processes and partnerships developed between school boards, regional governments and community organizations the researchers were able to uncover lessons to inform policy and practice. The aim of the study is to strengthen child and family centred services in communities.

Key Findings

The Schools at the Centre study explored the impact of FDK and EDP operated by school boards and community agencies on administrators, educators and parents, and investigated how different boards responded to FDK and the requirement to provide EDP in their community.

Through surveys and focus groups, parents in the Waterloo region were asked how FDK and EDP impact their family and their child's life and its influence on their employment decisions. Kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators' perceptions of their professional status were surveyed across all four boards. Early childhood educators were also asked about changes to compensation and benefits as a result of public sector employment. School administrators and community leaders shared ideas on factors that contribute to holistic learning and family support during the implementation of the program.

Lessons from this study inform public policy development to support a more effective and seamless approach to early learning, build stronger professional partnerships and better enable parents to support their children's early learning.

Parents

- 85 percent of parents agreed that FDK/EDP help prepare their child socially and academically for school
- Parents were equally divided as to whether their involvement with their child's learning increased or decreased as a result of FDK
- 75 percent of parents receiving child care subsidies reported that FDK/EDP facilitates their ability to work
- Parents receiving subsidies reported that FDK/EDP relieved family stress

Educators

- 85 percent of ECEs reported seeing an increase in benefits
- Most ECEs saw their wages either increase or remain the same, but a significant percentage in Waterloo and Ottawa (20-25 percent) took a wage decrease to work for a school board
- 25 percent of ECEs reported having an undergraduate or graduate degree in addition to their ECE diploma
- Teachers and ECEs do not always share the same views of their roles.
- More teachers and ECEs believe that teachers are responsible for literacy related activities, while both are more likely to agree that numeracy learning is more equally shared
- Both educators indicated that they share responsibility for children with special needs
- Most ECEs reported that having a union improves their professional status
- Teachers and ECEs stated that limited access to joint planning time and joint professional development contributes to weak professional partnerships
- Both sets of educators are committed to improving access to planning, which they view as central to a comprehensive learning program

Administrators

- Administrators reported improved outcomes for children as a result of FDK
- Additional systems were developed to support the FDK/EDP educator partnerships
- Administrators reported fewer implementation challenges as lessons were learned from each phase of the rollout

- Professional development opportunities for ECEs are dependent on administrator flexibility and school budgets
- The sharing of space and resources between the school day and after-school programming is more challenging when schools do not directly operate the EDP
- Lack of ECE supply staff is problematic across boards
- More supports are required for children with special need

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Region: Ontario [5]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/02/schools-centre-findings-case-studies-exploring-seamless> [2]

http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/What_We_Do/SATC/Schools_at_the_Centre_Final_Report_-_Feb_5_2015.pdf [3]

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