



Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

Bulletin #2 – With Our Best Future In Mind

“With Our Best Future in Mind” – What Does the Report Say About ECE’s?

What Does the Report Say About Early Childhood Educators?

In the last provincial election, Dalton McGuinty promised \$200 million in 2010 and \$300 million in 2011 for a new program of full-day learning for 4 and 5 year olds. He appointed Charles Pascal to write a report on how the program could be implemented. “With Our Future in Mind” was released on June 15.

The report validates the skills and capacity of Early Childhood Educators. In particular, the report states:

“The two unassailable givens that must be part of any full-day learning program are educators with child development knowledge and skills, and an effective parent engagement strategy” (page 33)

As with many past reports, the report recognizes that ECE’s have been underpaid for their skills and capacity. The report proposes “average annual ECE salaries of \$47,000, with benefits totalling 24 per cent” (endnote 58, page 63) for those ECE’s in the full-day learning program in the schools.

This is a huge step forward for ECE’s. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has long argued that it is essential to raise wages for a quality program, to attract people to the field and motivate them to stay.

ECE’s and the Full-day Learning Program for 4 and 5 year old children

ECE’s in the full-day learning program would work as part of a staff team with teachers and other educational professionals to provide early learning and care from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Another critical recommendation is that ECE’s should have full-time jobs. The report says that “school boards should organize staffing to promote full-time employment for ECE’s. ECEs should form a unique professional classification within school boards” (page 32).

ECE’s and the Extended Day Primary Program for children from 6 to 8

The Extended Day Primary Program is after school early learning and care for children from 6 to 8 year old. This program would be staffed by an ECE employed by the school board. To address the issue of split shifts and part-time work the report states “Boards will be able to create full-time positions for these educators by using their broad skill base to enhance a number of programs, such as literacy, arts, culture and recreation, and to provide support for children with special needs” (page 34).

ECE’s and Best Start Child and Family Centres

The report continues the existing trend of encouraging new entrants to early childhood education to have an ECE diploma. For Best Start Child and Family Centres, the Early Learning Program for 4 and 5’s and the Extended Day Primary Program “An ECE two-year diploma is an appropriate credential for entry to practice” (page 36).

Recommendations on Training and Qualifications

Recognizing the significant need for training, the report makes many recommendations to upgrade skills and qualifications. The report recommends a new early childhood specialty degree program focusing on children from infants to 8 years old.

Full-day Learning Program for 4 and 5 year old children

“In the short term, full-day learning program teachers would have a combination of existing ECE diplomas and degrees” (page 36)

“Moving forward, a specialty degree in early childhood education should be the required qualification...The specialty will provide the core knowledge and skills necessary for working with children from 0-8” (page 36).

“Universities and community colleges can collaborate to build on the foundation of the current ECE and teacher education programs to create and deliver the preparatory program (page 36).

Best Start Child and Family Centres

The specialty degree envisioned in the full-day learning program “should be the required qualification for directors in Best Start Child and Family Centres and early childhood resource teachers” (page 36).

The report recommends a wide range of training programs for child care staff:

“Particularly during the transition to a new integrated family service system, a combination of individual and team in-service professional development is needed. A province-wide in-service training plan for educators should be developed” (page 36).

“A menu of options that makes professional education more accessible could include multiple entry points to postsecondary programs, recognition of professional learning outside of formal postsecondary programs (prior learning assessment), apprenticeship programs that are aligned with postsecondary institutions, and use of electronic technology in distance education programs. Embedding in-service professional development in practice is also essential” (page 37).

Of particular interest to child care supervisors might be the section on Leaders and Coaches which calls for expanded programs in mentoring and skills development:

“Best Start Child and Family Centres will require educational leadership and operational management. Municipal authorities should have child and family consultants to coach and mentor staff teams and ensure program effectiveness and accountability. Existing positions and resources that now support the provisions of the Day Nurseries Act, family literacy initiatives, Ontario Early Years Centres and the municipal administration of the child care system can be repositioned to provide continuous learning opportunities and best practice in Best Start Child and Family Centres” (page 36 in the shaded box).

Questions from the Early Learning and Child Care Sector

- We currently charge \$9 to \$10.50 for after school care for all age groups. \$20 a day is not very affordable for parents, especially in rural parts of the Province.

- We started an after school program with 6 kids. It's going to be hard for some communities to have 15 families to start a program.

- What will happen to local child care centres when 4 year olds leave? 3 year olds can certainly fill the spaces but at a much higher staffing ratio which equals more operating costs.

- What will happen to stand alone centres with Kindergarten and school aged programs? We serve a school that is bursting at the seams.

What Are Your Questions?

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is collecting your questions. Your questions will help us focus on your issues and help us identify areas of concern. Email your questions to andrea@childcareontario.org

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care Bulletins on “With Our Future in Mind”

Bulletin#1: Background and Context; Information to Get You Started

Bulletin #2: What Does the Early Learning Advisor’s Report say about Early Childhood Educators?

Upcoming:

What Does the Early Learning Advisor’s Report say about funding for infants to four year olds?

What Is a Best Start Child and Family Centre?

How Much Will the Full Implementation of the Report Cost? How Much Funding is Committed today?

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is funded by our members including child care centres, family resource programs, OEYC’s, individuals and provincial groups with a mandate for universal, publicly funded, high quality, not-for-profit early learning and child care programs. For membership information, please visit our website. Thanks!