

## The Evolution Of Full Day Learning In Peel

In June 2009, the Province released Dr. Charles Pascal's report, *With Our Best Future in Mind, Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. This report recommended:

- ❑ The government implement a comprehensive plan of action regarding the implementation of early learning.
- ❑ A framework which allows Ontario's Best Start goals to move further towards the delivery of a seamless and integrated system to support children prenatal to 12 years old and their families

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, responded in October with an announcement to deliver a new program of full-day early learning for four-and-five year olds. To support this initiative in November 2009, the Ministry of Education announced the Early Learning Division, led by Jim Grieve, Assistant Deputy Minister, responsible for the implementation of:

- ❑ Full-day early learning for 35,000 4 and 5 year olds in 600 schools, with full implementation by 2015-16.
- ❑ Phase one in Peel which will result in 3,978 four-and-five year olds attending a full-day early learning program at 36 schools (20 Peel District School Board and 16 Dufferin Peel District School Board).
- ❑ Phase-One schools were selected by school boards and municipalities according to the available space in schools not requiring capital funding support.
- ❑ Coordinated planning with coterminous boards, municipalities and local Best Start Networks' impact on existing local child care and the varying needs of all communities were considered.

The full-day early learning program model will provide a full-day program for:

- ❑ Children over 4 years old. The core program (for example, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) will be funded by the province and delivered during the instructional day by an elementary teacher and a registered Early Childhood Educator.
- ❑ Children during the school calendar and regular instructional days not including professional activity days, March break, Christmas holidays and the summer months.

The program model will also provide an extended day program for:

- ❑ Four-and-five year olds (for example, 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.) which will be school board delivered by Early Childhood Educators, employed by school boards. Plans for an extended day program on non-instructional days have yet to be addressed at the school board level.

Peel has responded to the recommendation to implement full-day early learning by:

- ❑ Engaging early learning and child care service providers in an ongoing dialogue about the government's vision and direction
- ❑ Documenting and presenting early learning and child care service provider's feedback to the Ministries of Children and Youth Services and Education
- ❑ Creating a full-day early learning Cost Analysis Toolkit to assist child care service providers explore potential program replacements
- ❑ Presenting the Cost Analysis Toolkit to other municipalities and offering it as a resource to other child care service sectors
- ❑ Developing web based resources including a Full-Day Learning mailbox, monthly e-bulletins, Q & A pages, and links to resources for early learning and child care operators, early childhood educators and parents

The impact of the full-day early learning for four-and-five year olds will be service system-wide and will affect:

- ❑ Municipally-operated Learn.Play.Care Centres, as the pool of children requiring early learning programs will be reduced over time as more schools across the region introduce early learning for four-and-five year olds
- ❑ The greater child care sector, as it addresses the uncertain uptake of the four-and-five year olds exiting child care programs.
- ❑ The fee subsidy system for the extended day program for four-and-five year olds with the school boards, as they may no longer remain within the municipal child care system.
- ❑ The planning model for year-round child care options for four-and-five year olds.
- ❑ Overall service capacity and current costs due to the changing age group priorities for prenatal to 3.8 years. The Region is therefore requesting a provincial/federal commitment of the Best Start de-allocated funds; in addition to transitional capital and operating funding, to support current service levels.

The phase-in of full-day early learning for four-and-five year olds will allow municipalities to plan for and stabilize the prenatal to 3.8 service sub-system, including the consolidation of services into the Best Start Child and Family Centres. These centres will consolidate an extensive range of parenting programs, resources and link to prenatal and postnatal services. Implementation of the Best Start Child and Family Centres will have a wide ranging impact and require a coordinated approach from both Human Services and Health Departments.

The Region of Peel fully supports the transformation of the Province's Early Learning Program. Together with the Province, school boards, early learning and child care partners we are committed to ensuring the implementation of programs and services that benefit children, families and the Peel community.

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