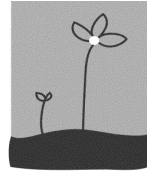


Toronto First Duty: Guide to Early Years Service Integration



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Common Session:

Have each participant introduce themselves and what they do.

What is an integrated Early Childhood Service?



It combines the three early years silos – kindergarten, child care and parenting supports -- into a single program that:

- Supports the learning and healthy development of all young children

At the same time as it:

- Supports parents to work, study, care for other family members and participate in their communities
- Supports parents in their parenting role

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Integrated Early Years Services

We believe education, care and parenting supports can be delivered simultaneously.

With few exceptions however governments still operate in silos – the realization that children can be ‘cared for’ and ‘educated’ at the same time is not evident in public policy. Our definition challenges those silos.

The concept of educational child care is also supported by research. A study conducted by University of Toronto economists demonstrating that by combining quality educational programs with good child care there is a 2 for 1 cost benefit.

In our view, a child’s participation in a good quality early learning and care program should not be determined by their parents’ employment status. Considerable research demonstrates that quality programs benefit children whether or not their parents are in the paid labour force.

We will test this definition as we move through our sessions. Are there any questions now?



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Integrated services



- Quality early learning and care environments for children that parents access on a full, part time or occasional bases.
- Children attend on their own or with their parents allowing stable relationships with staff and peers.
- Readily accessible information & referral to specialized services.

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Integrated services

Can be delivered at a single site such as the school or through a neighbourhood hub of interconnected services. Service are available on a full, part-time, occasional or emergency basis. Children may attend activities alone or with their parents, allowing them to develop stable relationships with friends and staff. Parents are always welcomed in the program and activities are designed to include them. Parents are informed about their child's entire day. Children with special challenges are less likely to fall through the cracks.



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Why Integrate?

- Accountability -- single entity is answerable for child/parent well being.
- More cost effective than current siloed delivery.
- Builds on the school as an established community asset and the neighbourhood centre for all children --taking the guesswork out of where parents go to find needed supports.
- Flexible -- responding to the changing needs of the family as their children grow.

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Outcomes of integration

- Participation is not tied to the income or work status of the parents.
- Cost is not a barrier to participation.
- Improves quality by blending the strengths of the three early years silos. For example child care ratios are maintained throughout the day.
- Team approach provides consistency for the child and facilitates peer learning of staff.
- Facilitates parent involvement -- a known factor in school success – through the convenience of a single site for parent and child resources.

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We are looking for programs that are universally accessible, affordable, high quality and comprehensive.

Research indicates that integrated programs provide better quality programming than their stand alone counterparts. Parents at TFD sites are also more likely to interact with staff, attend activities and participate in school functions.

Tied to Canada-wide goals



Sound child development strategies promote:

- Healthy populations
- Social inclusion
- Life-long learning



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to Early Childhood Service Integration

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The well-being of young children has moved beyond the private confines of individual families to receive international attention. The United Nations, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, to name a few, emphasize the importance of public investments in the early years.

The assessment of David Dodge, governor of the Bank of Canada, is that scarce public resources should be directed at the very young. Research by economists such as Nobel Prize winner James Heckman and David Teffler show that early childhood development investments yield a higher return than most economic development initiatives.

In Canada, The National Children's Agenda and the federal government's Innovation Strategy name early childhood as the key point of intervention to improve health, promote social inclusion and life-long learning.

The reports agree that advances in these areas are a prerequisite to Canada's continued prosperity.

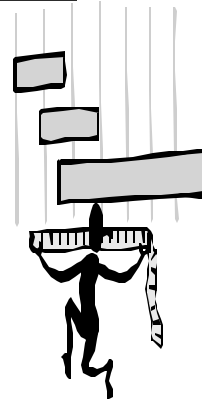
Our task



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To develop an integrated early years service through:

- Reviewing and assessing the services in our community
- Forging a joint vision
- Developing operational protocols
- Activating our decisions



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What now exists

Kindergarten

Child care

Pre/post natal

Nursery school

Special needs

Where to begin?

Head start

Family resource/information centre

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Service fragmentation

In the absence of coherent public policy, an array of services for young children has developed, including: full day child care; drop-in play groups; nursery school; kindergarten; head start and family resource programs among others. Parents often piece together a number of different arrangements to meet their needs. As a result, young children can go through multiple caregivers in different settings in a single day. We would consider this problematic for a child in grade 4, yet this is common for many four year olds.

The results of fragmentation



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- For children: services are not consistent and quality varies
- For parents: either not available, not the right kind or too expensive
- For providers: fragile funding, difficulties finding and keeping staff
- For communities: rising demand for more expensive, intervention programs

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Fallout of fragmentation:

- There is little stability for children who can go through a series of different care providers and programs in different settings.
- Parents in rural or isolated communities; those who need occasional care or work non-traditional hours; those who have an infant or school age child or a child with special needs find it particularly difficult to find appropriate services. There are long wait lists for some services and if user fees are attached, the high cost eliminates many families.
- Funding for services for young children is very vulnerable to political change.
- Low wages in the sector make it difficult for providers to find and attract qualified staff; even in better paid sectors such as education, work with young children is less valued than work with older children.
- The lack of a system makes it very difficult to monitor progress and hold services accountable for child outcomes. For example, if a 10 year old doesn't read, the education system is expected to address the problem. The same is not true for younger children, where no single institution is mandated to meet their needs.



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How others do it: Quebec

- Ministry of the Family regulates and funds Children's Centres. Centres focus on children 0-4 years providing parent information and support; plus group and family educational care on full, part time and occasional basis. Parents pay one low fee.
- Ministry of Education provides before and after school programs for children 5-12 years. Parents pay one low fee.

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Quebec model

Quebec split jurisdictions for children's services. Children 5–12 went with the education ministry which has responsibility for before and after school programs. Children 0-4 come under a new family ministry. Between 1998 and 2005 Quebec undertook a massive expansion of children's early learning and care services increasing provision from 7% to 33% of the child population 0-12. At the same time it made considerable investments in improving quality and attracting new entrants to the workforce.



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How others do it:

GBC Seamless Kindergarten Programs

- Integration of child care and kindergarten programs for children ages 3 to 5 years at 5 sites.
- Full-day and part-day attendance possible – program in operation from 7:30 – 5:30 or 6 pm
- ECE staff – 1 to 8 or 1 to 10 ratios. Parents encouraged to participate with child when dropping off, picking up or at any point during the day
- Individual child portfolios note children’s skill acquisition in relation to MOE expectations. Report cards (using TDSB standard format) prepared before child enters Grade 1

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George Brown College Lab schools offer parents an option to kindergarten enrollment. Children continue in child care program full time until Grade One. The college uses only trained staff and staff turnover is very low. Regular child care fees apply. The developmental goals recognize Ministry of Education’s expectations for kindergarten and Day Nursery Act’s programs requirements. Morning and afternoon activity periods include group time, project work and activities geared to individual development. Daily routines include snack, lunch and a naptime option.

How others do it: Toronto First Duty



- Kindergarten, child care and family support services combine into a single program for children 0-5
- Space and resources are shared
- Integrated curriculum draws on the content and practice of the three streams
- Kindergarten teachers, ECEs, parenting workers and teaching assistants plan and deliver the program as a team.
- Accessible low fee.

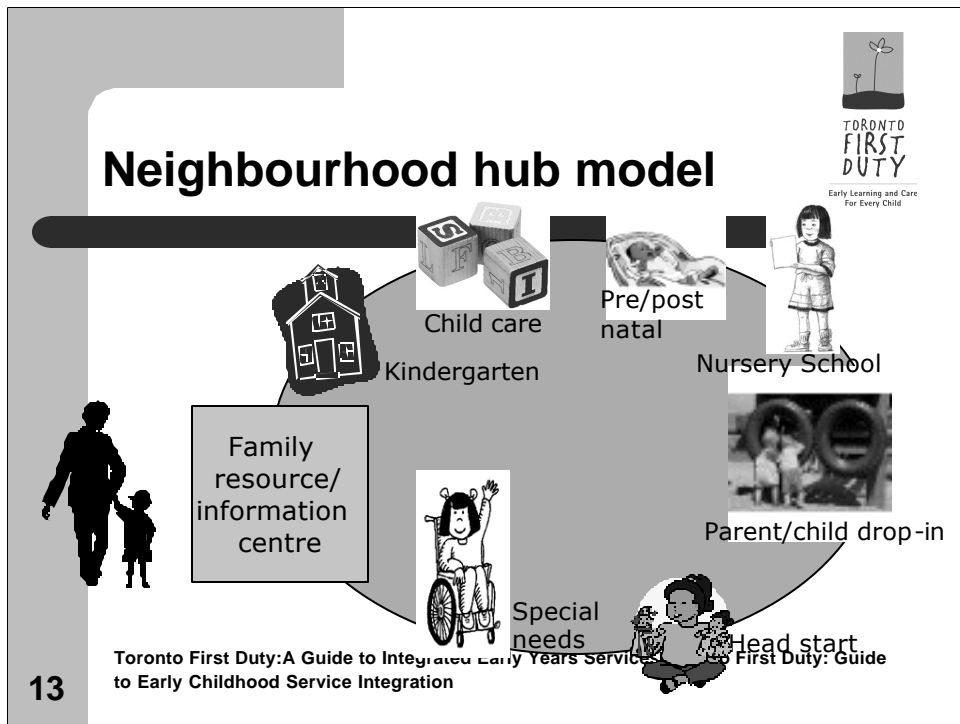
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Toronto First Duty

This is a work in progress... a partnership between the City of Toronto, Toronto schools and community agencies and supported by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation to demonstrate service integration. First Duty programs operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with some evening and weekend activities. Children attend for an extended, full or part day or occasionally. Information resources and parent/child drop-in activities are provided in the participating schools. Parents pay nothing for part time or drop-in services and a graduated fee for extended or full day programs. The school as the neighbourhood centre for families receives high parent satisfaction particularly when there are a number of children in the family. Parents are relieved of the chore of dropping children at multiple sites.

Each sector continues to meet its respective legislative requirements, meeting all the health and safety requirements of child care legislation as well as the curriculum expectations of the Ministry of Education. Show 11 minute video describing Toronto First Duty.



Neighbourhood hub

Another model that has long been under discussion is the Neighbourhood Hub. Through the Resource and Information Centre families access the range of children’s services available in their communities. Consistency is maintained throughout the various programs and information is shared with the agreement of the parents.



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Quality early years programming

National and international studies

concur, quality early years services depend on:

- Comprehensive staff training and fair working conditions
- Regulations that support quality and are enforceable
- Universal access
- Adequate, stable funding

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Quality

Today's families are under considerable stress. Families whose children have special needs and refugee, immigrant and aboriginal families have particular challenges. Yet staff training has not kept pace with the new demands on the profession. Wages and working conditions are a major barrier to finding and retaining skilled staff.

Regulations should support the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of the child. Governments and service providers should be held accountable to the community for the level and quality of the services they provide.

Targeted services are stigmatizing for the user and vulnerable to political change.

Funding must be at a level that supports quality and allows for planning.

Break

Families in our community



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- Number of children
- Percentage of families with children under 6
- Number of children with special needs
- Average family size
- Cultural origins
- Labour force participation
- Family Earnings

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Environmental scan exercise

Define the boundaries of your community – is it the school's boundaries? The riding? ...

Allow participants to offer answers before presenting findings from the environmental scan.



Family services in our community

Service for families with young children	Who operates it?	How is it funded?	What legislation governs it?	Who uses it?
Kindergarten	School board	Municipal taxes & Prov grants	Provincial Education Act	Children 4 & 5 years old

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Record the types of services for young children and families in the community. Include Kindergarten, CAPC, recreation, public health programs.

The operator: Identify the entity that receives the funding. Is it the local government [such as a school board], a community board, a corporation or individual?

Funding: User fees, public funding, a combination? List the predominate source of funds first.

Legislative framework: Most services meet a number of legislative requirements. This exercise is to identify the ministry/department with primary responsibility for policy and funding. In some case policy will be set primarily by a provincial ministry, while funding comes from user fees, or local government.

Users: Is the service open to everyone in the community or is their eligibility criteria? What is the criteria? Include legislated and non legislated criteria. For example, special needs services are open to children with a designated special needs. Child care is open to families with sufficient income to pay user fees or those who qualify for subsidies. Kindergarten is open to everyone who has reached age four by a certain date.

Use the map to indicate the location of services in your community.

The next series of slides goes into the various categories in more depth



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Parent participation

- Are there activities for parents/caregivers? Describe them.
- Describe the parents who participate.
- What is the criteria for their participation?
- Are parents encouraged to participate? How?

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Parent participation exercise

Do any of the activities include parents? Child/parent activities? Food? Information? Formal classes? Links to other services such as health, housing, employment, etc?

Parents who actively participate in the children's learning are critical. How will this system encourage parent participation?



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Children's Activities

- What activities do the various program provide for children?
- Describe the children who participate in the programs.
- What is the criteria for participation?

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Children's activities exercise

The exercise is focused on developing the service model. Introduce the session saying we are looking for 'can' comments only. Barriers will be covered later or can be put in a 'parking lot' until they arise.

Brainstorm about the features of the children's program. Describe what the children do? Is food served? Visits by public health? In-and-outdoor play? Is personal care included (toileting, etc.)? Is there a place for children to sleep?

Do children attend by themselves; with their parents; their siblings? Are groups of children divided up? What is the criteria – age? Abilities? Whether the parent is present?



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Accessing services

- How would a parent find out about services?
- Describe the enrolment process?
- How would a parent who needed additional resources access them?
- Are the services conveniently located?
- How would parents in our community find services?
- What is the enrollment process?
- Is there a waiting list for services?
- Do parents pay fees?

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There are likely a number of services in the community but are they meeting family needs?

As you go through this exercise, challenge participants by asking them to provide examples of different family types. Would an aboriginal family be able to find culturally sensitive services? How would two parents working full time with a toddler and a pre-schooler make out? A single parent who works weekends? A parent with a child with special needs?

At each stage note the barriers the family confronts in finding, accessing and using services.

Other questions:

Is there a single entry point where families could find about services and their availability?

Are they accessible by public transit? Are they convenient to other services?

Is there a needs test? Income eligibility?

Is there any link between the core service and more specialized services such as speech and language etc?

Where are the services – in schools, workplaces, community centres, stand alone, churches?



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The consequences

- For children?
- Parents?
- The Community?

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The consequences exercise

Have participants discuss the outcomes of inadequate service provision.

Ask them to identify the gaps in service provision.

Test willingness of participants to proceed.

End of Common Session -- Ask participants to think about solutions to problems they just identified before meeting again.