



STAFF REPORT FOR ACTION

Informing the Development of a Full day Program for Junior and Senior Kindergarten

Date:	February 5, 20008
To:	Community Development and Recreation
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the research findings and best practices from Toronto First Duty in order to inform the development of a full day program for junior and senior kindergarten in the Province. It recommends that the report along with the research reports from Toronto First Duty (TFD) be sent to the Special Advisor to the Premier on full –day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (1) this report along with the research findings from Toronto First Duty be forwarded to Dr. Charles Pascal, Special Advisor to the Premier on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds; and
- (2) the City of Toronto asks to participate in consultations on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds to inform the strategy development.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no immediate financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

Two previous Council reports reported on the research findings of Toronto First Duty.

See

http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/serviceplans_integration.pdf and

http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/firstduty_phase1_finalrpt.pdf

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Toronto First Duty Project initially approved by Council in May 1999, was developed through a partnership between the City of Toronto, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Toronto District School Board. Through five school-based community sites the project has demonstrated the integration of key children's services: child care, kindergarten, family resource programs and other services that support the wellbeing of children and their families. A key element of TFD has been a thorough and ongoing evaluation so that all partners would learn what works and begin to apply these learning in the development of children's services in communities.

At its meeting of June 14, 15 and 16, 2005, Council directed that the Children's Services General Manager report back on the final evaluation of Toronto First Duty following the completion of the pilot project.

See <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc050614/cms5rpt/cl011.pdf>

Preliminary findings of Phase 1 Toronto First Duty were included in a report titled the Integration of Children's Services Plans considered by Council at its meeting of March 29 and 30, 2006 (first link above under Decision History). At this meeting Council further directed that the General Manager, Children's Services report back to Community Services Committee as early as possible, but no later than June 8, 2006, on options for continuing components of the First Duty pilot evaluation showed were successful and that would otherwise be discontinued at the end of June, 2006, such report to include options for expanding those programs across the city (second link above under Decision History).

In addition, Council approved unspent funding from the Child Care Expansion/First Duty Reserve of up to \$25,000.00 be directed for each of the First Duty Projects operated by Macaulay Child Development Centre, N.Y.A.D (Community) Inc., the Child Development Institute and East York/East Toronto Family Resources to fund summer programs at a total cost of \$100,000.00, and that the contracts with these organizations be extended to September 1, 2006, for this purpose. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation committed to fund the fifth project, Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre, operated by Bruce Public School, until June 2008.

During the recent 2007 election campaign, the Government promised to move forward on full-day learning for four-and five-year olds and appoint an Early Learning Advisor to advise the Government on how to achieve this. On November 27, 2007 the Premier appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as Special Advisor to recommend strategy.

See <http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/Product.asp?ProductID=1782&Lang=EN>

At its meeting of November 8, 2007, the Children's Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) passed a motion requesting the General Manager, Children's Services, to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee on the research findings and best practices of Toronto First Duty that should inform the development of a full day program for junior and senior kindergarten in the province.

The purpose of the Children's Services Advisory Committee is to monitor and advise the Mayor and City Council on policies, programs, strategies and actions to achieve a comprehensive system of integrated, inclusive and high quality services that will support best outcomes for Toronto's children including monitoring and advising the City on the progress of Best Generation Yet (BGY). The Advisory Committee provides advice to the Mayor and Council through the Community Development and Recreation Committee.

COMMENTS

Toronto First Duty: Research Findings

Toronto First Duty (TFD) was designed to provide early learning and care for every child. It aimed to support the healthy development from conception to entry to Grade 1 at the same time as it supported parents to work or study and in their parenting role. Toronto First Duty undertook to bring together regulated child care, kindergarten and family support programs into a single, accessible program delivery platform that is located primarily in elementary schools and co-ordinated with early intervention and family health services.

TFD aimed to test-drive new public policy and influenced policy in Ontario and other jurisdictions. The Ontario's Best Start Strategy shares a common long-term vision of a 0-6 year old system.

During the start up and implementation of TFD Phase 1 (July 2002 to 2005), the five TFD sites worked towards the vision of integrated early learning environments, early childhood staff teams, local governance, seamless access, and parent participation.

In July 2005, TFD commenced with TFD Phase 2 following the completion of the City's funding. In this phase only one site, Bruce WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) continued to operate. The project was funded for an additional three years (to June 2008). The site is a prototype that continues to expand the First Duty delivery model - integrating child care, kindergarten, and family support programs into a single program.

The research findings for TFD chart the changes, benefits and challenges at three levels:

program, practices and policy; families and children; and communities from 2001-2005. The findings are based on data provided by assessments of program quality and child outcomes; parent, staff and community surveys, and an economic analysis.

Practice, Programs, and Policy

- For programs, the rated quality of early childhood program environments (on the ECERS-R, a standardized measure of quality) generally increased.
- TFD programs were reviewed early in 2003 and again in 2005. Quality was found to improve across all indicators with the biggest advances made in the use of space, program activities and parent/staff communication
- For front line staff, working in integrated staff teams meant overcoming predictable professional barriers to find common purpose in improving program environments and improving results for children. Staff teams worked most seamlessly and effectively when they had time to meet on a regular basis, had joint professional development, concrete aims for program improvement and specific aims for children
- For successful integrated early childhood school hubs, organizational change and leadership are required. At the school level, principal leadership and buy-in helped sites move further towards the integrated model than others.
- School classrooms licensed under the *Day Nurseries Act* allow for multi-use of space to support child development and health and safety standards

Families

- For parents, experience with integrated preschool services in TFD appeared to increase their capacity and confidence in helping their children learn, and in communicating with the school and teachers in kindergarten.
- Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with TFD programming and with the concept of integrated services.
- For children, the evaluation was not designed to directly test outcomes. However, both kindergarten teacher ratings of school readiness on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and direct assessments by the research suggest that children have benefited socially and in pre-academic skill.
- Bringing together child care, kindergarten and family support promotes parent engagement.

Cost-effectiveness

- Integrated service delivery in the primary grades is no more expensive than traditional child care wrapped around school hours. Overall, integration provides more hours of programming for the same cost as traditional service delivery.

Putting it all Together

Separate funding, governance, and legislative structures for education, child care, and other family and children's services make it difficult to integrate people and programs at the local level. Differences in staffing requirements, regulations and funding structures become obstacles to making seamless environments. Long-term change and sustainability requires an overhaul of legislative requirements, professional education and development of staff, and local governance structures.

The on-the-ground success of the TFD model depends on the front-line staff. System redesign will remove many barriers. However, it is essential that staff is motivated to become part of an integrated early childhood workforce, which means blending professional education and development, as well as developing equitable compensation and working environments.

Although child care is central to the range of options necessary to support young children and their families, it remains the program component that is most difficult to incorporate and expand in an integrated model. It is the only program that relies on parent fees (paid directly by the parents or through child care fee subsidies) and is the most regulated component. Experience in TFD sites shows how these factors act as barriers to innovation and integration.

TFD researchers concluded that integrated children's services engages parents in the school and their child's early learning, improves the quality of early childhood programs and enhances child outcomes by supporting children's social, emotional and academic readiness for school.

Toronto First Duty: Best Practices

Over the past few years Toronto First Duty has been informing Toronto's Best Start Strategy. Strengthening the collaboration between child care, kindergarten and family supports has been the focus and a survey was implemented under the direction of Toronto's Best Start Network. The survey entitled "How are We Working Together?" conducted in spring 2007 of all elementary schools, child care, and family support programs in Toronto, identified that collaboration is happening across the city to varying degrees, from co-ordination, to collaboration and integration. A short film produced to communicate Toronto's Vision for Children provides some examples of best practices taking place in the city.

One innovative example of collaboration includes teachers travelling to local child care centres to deliver the kindergarten programs alongside ECE's, enabling a more seamless approach, and reducing transitions for the children. Survey results highlighted that many programs located in schools co-ordinate their program with the school - sometimes working together on joint events, sharing professional development opportunities with their colleagues, and / or meeting regularly as an early year's team.

The Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC), one of the five Toronto First Duty sites, provides an example of fully integrated, accessible child care/kindergarten/family service delivery.

BWELC is located in Bruce Junior Public School and serves a mixed income community with a large new immigrant population in the South Riverdale / Leslieville neighbourhood of Toronto. BWELC is designed to offer a high quality, consistent yet flexible early learning and care program for children from prenatal to six in the school catchment that supports parents to work and / or study, and provides parenting supports and resources.

BWELC operates from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday to Friday year round, and serves children and families from pre-natal to grade two. The school has classes up to grade six.

Bruce Public Junior School and WoodGreen Community Services (a multi-service community agency) are the lead site partners. The school principal and centre manager (employed by WoodGreen) jointly supervise the program. The management committee includes WoodGreen; Bruce School; the City of Toronto's Children's Services and Public Health divisions; Toronto District School Board (TDSB); the Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF); and the Child Development Institute at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

Integrated service delivery

Integrated governance

The partners pool their resources to plan and deliver the program. Bruce School supplies the physical space and staffing including the principal, kindergarten teachers, parenting workers, teaching assistants and administrative support staff. WoodGreen supports the centre manager, ECE staff and resource teacher in addition to providing administrative assistance, professional development and family support referrals. TDSB contributes professional development and meeting release time for the principal and kindergarten teachers in addition to the support of its superintendents and Early Years Department. The Foundation for Student Success supports the nutrition program. Toronto Public Health delivers additional parenting programs and early identification and referral. The Child Development Institute offers social skills groups and parenting programs. Children with special needs and families requiring additional assistance access help through WoodGreen, TDSB and the City.

Funding for minor capital, start-up, and transition and operating costs is provided by the ACF and the City of Toronto. The TDSB funds the half-day program for children 3.8 years to 6 years.

Seamless access

Through a single enrolment process, families are able to access the full range of activities the program offers. Participation is flexible – parents may attend at anytime with their children.

Children aged 2½ and older are eligible for a part-day non-parental program at no cost. If parents wish their children to attend for more hours, the parent contribution is \$7/day for the full day (to 3:30 p.m.) and \$15 for an extended day (to 6 p.m.). Eligible families may apply for financial assistance through the City's child care fee subsidy program. Emergency care is also available. The parent fee for the extended day program is one-third to one-half the cost of traditional child care services. The program runs year round. One-third of the children attending the program (either part time or full time) have a parent in the home – an indication of the wide need for non-parental care including for parents who are not in the workforce.

Integrated early learning environment

The school's classrooms are licensed under the *Day Nurseries Act* allowing multi-use of space to support child development and health and safety standards.

Staff teams

The program is delivered by a teaching team of early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, parenting workers and educational assistants using a common curriculum, resources and space. Integrated staffing allows a child/adult (teacher or ECE) ratio approximating the requirements of the *Day Nurseries Act* and is well below the provincial 20-children / teacher cap for kindergarten-aged children.

Parent participation

Parent participation is paramount to children's success. Parents are welcome to take place in all the activities of the Centre all the time. This includes eating lunch or snacks with their children, joining in their children's classroom activities and participating in adult-only classes or in parent / child activities.

After school programs

After school programming for older children is also offered at the site. ECEs (employed by WoodGreen and supervised by the BWELC manager) support classroom activities during school hours and direct after school programming. The continuity of consistent adults is viewed as important particularly for children in the earlier grades. Because project funding is not available for children in grade one and above, parents pay regular child care fees.

BWELC demonstrates the potential of integrated early years programming. It meets the multiple and changing needs of families for a variety of parenting supports and resources.

Current Status

Toronto Children's Services has been asked by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) Regional Office staff to participate in a survey of best practices in collaborating programs, and to facilitate site visits to the three Toronto programs recommended. The Ministry visiting teams will be seeing up to 30 programs across the province. The visits are to include both the child care operator or supervisor, and a representative from the school board. The visits are to consist of a tour, a time for observation of the program in action, and a sit-down with the supervisor/school board representative.

School boards are also involved in preparing reports in anticipation of being asked for information.

There are 52,145 children aged 4- and 5-years in Toronto. (2006 Census count) and over 6,700 of these children are enrolled in child care. It will be necessary to determine the impact of a full day early learning program on the child care system in order to plan for successful implementation.

CONTACT

Pamela Musson
Program Manager, Service Planning Unit
Children's Services Division
Tel: 416-392-3593
Email: pmusson@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Brenda Patterson
General Manager