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**CITY OF TORONTO**

**MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

**STRATEGY**

**FRAMEWORK**

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**MAY 2009**





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## INTRODUCTION

Although school is the place where children consolidate their early learning and acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed later in life, most of a child's day is spent outside the classroom.

A major portion of this time is spent in the home under the care and guidance of parents. But a significant portion of each weekday is, "out-of-school-time"—periods such as before school begins for the day and after it ends that is not supervised by teachers and during which working parents are not at home. There are also longer stretches of out-of-school-time such as summer holidays, March Break, Christmas holidays and professional activity days. Keeping children safe and engaged during these times is a critical concern for families and for the children's services sector. High quality programs are needed to supplement school activities and to ensure that children are safe until they are again in the care of their parents.

The children with the greatest need for out-of-school-time programs are roughly between the ages of six and twelve—children who may not yet be old enough to be left alone at home when school is not in session. These children are in their "middle childhood years." Their needs for care, enjoyable activity and personal development have often been overlooked. Working families with children in their middle years have often had to contend with a patchwork of services that may not always be accessible, affordable or developmentally appropriate.

To address these issues the City of Toronto is developing a Middle Childhood Strategy. The strategy will be grounded in the City's commitment to providing opportunities for *all* children to be safe, to develop new skills and to remain healthy through physical activity and nutrition. The Toronto Vision for Children, adopted by City Council, defines the City's stake in supporting the development of a system of integrated, inclusive and high quality, equitably accessible services for children 0–12:

*Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family, every child has the right to childhood experiences which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult*

The first step in the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy is this framework which examines the current service system and proposes a set of guiding principles and directions that will provide the foundation for the work ahead. The framework focuses on programs—primarily managed, funded or delivered by Children's Services and Parks Forestry and Recreation—that, at least in part, address the care needs of families. Notwithstanding this initial focus, it is important to recognize that there are many

other programs delivered directly by the City program areas such as Toronto Public Library, Cultural Services, and Toronto Public Health or funded through the Community Partnership and Investment Program and delivered by community organizations that deal with many aspects of children's development. These programs provide important opportunities for children to be active and to learn new skills, but do not necessarily have a care component. As the strategy is developed, it will eventually encompass the wider range of program opportunities.

Although there is much work still to do in better understanding families' needs for out-of-school-time programs, considerable effort and discussion have already gone into examining the issue. The Middle Childhood Strategy Framework builds on that work and suggests the directions that will lead to a more coordinated and effective system of out-of-school-time care and development. This document:

- Describes the importance of the middle childhood years and the benefits that out-of-school-time programs can provide.
- Reviews the characteristics and distribution of current out-of-school-time programs.
- Identifies some of the funding, jurisdictional and regulatory issues which affect out-of-school-time programs.
- Outlines the principles which will guide the development of a new service system and proposes directions which should constitute the first steps in that development.

When completed the Middle Childhood Strategy will form the basis for the City's work in service planning, policy development, investment priorities and program design and delivery. This framework is a starting point from which to begin action on developing a system of high quality programs for children 6-12, based on more effective collaboration between the various players in the children's services sectors.

The strategy framework reflects service realities as they exist in early 2009. Later this year, the provincial government will announce how it intends to introduce full-day learning for four-and five-year olds. Implementing full-day learning will be the most significant change to the Ontario school system since the elimination of Grade 13. When it comes, it could potentially have profound impacts on the funding of the existing child care system and on the future face of out-of-school-time programs. Although it is impossible to anticipate all the impacts of full-day learning, the principles outlined here should help shape the changes that it will bring.

## **NEW FOCUS ON MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

Over the past 15 years a great deal of attention has been focused on the needs of children in their early years and on issues facing youth. This has led to some significant investments in early learning and care and in programs for youth. More recently the needs of the children in the middle childhood years have begun to be addressed. The City is working with its community partners to develop a more integrated and effective system to deliver services for school-age children. City staff has played important roles in the Best Start Network, the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition and other initiatives to develop a better understanding of services needs and existing program models. In 2006-07, Children's Services, in partnership with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition–Toronto, conducted information gathering sessions which led to a better understanding of the needs of families.

In December 2006, Children's Services sponsored a School Age Forum at which community stakeholders discussed core principles. That session was followed up in May 2007 by a research forum at which various program models were highlighted. Later in 2007, the Coalition and the Community Social Planning Council with City support conducted a survey of after-school programs. The report on the survey findings was released in January 2009. The study provides useful information on the type and distribution of full-week programs available but underscores the need for more research on how many families need out-of-school-time programs and what kind of programs would suit them best.

The development of the strategy framework has provided the opportunity for community discussion of what constitutes program quality and what principles should guide the development of a more effective system of out-of-school-time programs. Stakeholder engagement sessions were held in March and April 2009, to inform the drafting of this framework.

## **IMPORTANCE OF MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMS**

The middle childhood years—roughly ages six to twelve—are a critical period in the lives of children. This is the time when children develop the important cognitive and social skills which help them make the transition from the early years into adolescence. It is a time when they begin to develop more resilience and self-confidence and begin to move from the close supervision of parents, teachers and other care givers towards the greater independence that comes in their teenage years.

Out-of-school-time programs— before and after school as well as during professional activity days, March Break and summer holidays— play a key role in helping children make these transitions. High

quality programs give children a range of new opportunities for play and learning that they may not have at home or in the classroom. They offer a meal or snack to ensure that children have the energy to participate in program activities. And, most important, quality out-of-school-time programs provide supervised care that ensures that children are safe while at the program. This supervision gives parents peace of mind while they are away from home at work or school. See page 15 for Elements of High Quality Programs.

Children in the 6–12 age group have a range of developmental needs. The situation of most 6–8-year-olds is considerably different than that of 9–12 year-olds. There needs to be a range of programming which reflects these differences. Out-of-school-time is a period when kids can be physically active, can learn new skills, or get extra help with their school work—or ideally a mix of all three activities. Quality out-of-school programs can support children’s physical and mental health as they:

- Develop important interpersonal skills through interactions that are more informal than those that take place in school.
- Safely explore independence, peer relationships, leadership and the formation of long lasting relationships with adults outside of their families.
- Stay healthy through regular physical activity, healthy eating and learning to manage stress.
- Explore their interests and aptitudes in areas such as arts, music, languages and sports.
- Develop more self discipline by setting a routine for time spent out of school.
- Achieve academic advantages which increase their chances for future success.
- Develop interests outside of school that will continue as they mature.
- Build resiliency and develop self-reliance leading to positive long-term outcomes.

Children who do not have access to quality programs outside of school hours may not only miss out on these benefits but may also experience negative outcomes. For example, children who are unsupervised in the hours after school or on the days when school is not in session are more likely to become victims of crime. Some research suggests that children in their middle years are at the greatest risk of physical and sexual assaults during the 3:00–7:00 p.m. time period. They are also more likely to engage in delinquent behaviours and are subject to the negative effects of increased exposure to television. Research also suggests that children— particularly low-income children— who do not attend summer programs experience a significant erosion of learning. They lose some of what they have learned during the previous school year and have to catch up again when school is back in session. The benefits that accrue from quality out-of-school-time programming and the risks associated with not having it make the stakes very high.



## **CITY ROLE**

Several City program areas offer a broad range of services for children in their middle years. Some of these programs focus on providing care, others on skill development and others on physical activity. These categories are, however, not mutually exclusive. Many have a mix of all three elements. Families often piece together various program offerings to meet their needs for care. The initial focus in the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy is on programs delivered or managed by Children's Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR). As the strategy is developed further it will reflect the broader range of programs for children between the ages of six and twelve.

## **Children's Services**

Because of the patchwork nature of out-of-school-time programs, it has been difficult to get a clear picture of the whole set of options available to families. The most precise information available comes from the child care system which is the primary source of out-of-school-time care for Toronto families. Toronto Children's Services is the service system manager for child care for children 0-12 years of age. The child care system consists of centre-based and home child care, family resource programs, special needs resourcing, before- and after-school programs and summer day programs. Across the city there are a total of 15,613 licensed school-age spaces—mostly occupied by children under the age of 10—in 467 centre-based programs. Two-thirds of these programs are located in schools and 20 are municipally operated programs.\* In addition, over 1,200 children spend their after-school hours with home child care providers who are affiliated with licensed home child care agencies.

Many other families make their own informal arrangements with neighbours or family members for after-school care.

In its role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, the City of Toronto has responsibility for planning the provision of child care services for Toronto children. Every five years, Toronto Children's Services develops and submits to the Province a Child Care Service Plan. The plan, which must first be approved by City Council, is a tool for guiding the funding and management of Toronto's children's services system. It provides a comprehensive overview of child care service needs, gaps and issues, and identifies the mix and level of child care services appropriate to local needs and priorities within a framework of provincial legislation, regulations, standards, policies and priorities. Work is now underway on the development of a new service plan to cover the period 2010-2014. In recognition of

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\* All data are as of May 20, 2009. More recent data can be found on [www.toronto.ca/children](http://www.toronto.ca/children)

the advantages in quality inherent in child care delivered by non-profit providers, City Council has directed that any expansion in the subsidized child care system will take place in the non-profit rather than the commercial sector.

► **Funding**

According to Children's Services figures, fees for school-age care range from approximately \$16 to \$34 per day. Currently 41% of school age children in the licensed system are fully or partially subsidized because their parents can not afford the full cost care. The level of subsidy is geared to family income.

The cost of subsidies is shared between the provincial and municipal governments. Besides the subsidies, additional funding supports in the form of wage grants benefit all children in care. The cost of child care for school-age children is also supported through the Federal Child Care Expense Deduction which reduces taxable income by up to \$4,000 for each child over the age of six; the actual benefit to the family depends upon the level of income of the family member that is eligible to claim this deduction on their income tax return.

Some out-of-school-time programs are 100 per cent funded by the City such as summer day programs and the 16 York Before and After School programs which serve 251 children in the former City of York. In 2008 a total of 6,356 children participated in 37 summer day programs funded by Children's Services. These programs operate during the summer for eight weeks or less. They are usually offered in high-needs areas, are recreationally based and operate for a full day.

► **Regulation and Quality Assurance**

Most elements of the child care system are funded and regulated under the provincial *Day Nurseries Act* (DNA). Regulation 262 of the DNA sets out minimum requirements for all licensed child care programs, such as staff-to-child ratios, health and safety standards, children's records, nutrition and behaviour management. These minimum standards must be met by all programs to obtain and keep their operating license. The licensing system is managed by the Province.

Toronto Children's Services has developed and administers a set of operating criteria to enhance the quality of child care programs. Programs that have fee subsidy contracts with the City are rated according to 33 criteria, grouped into eight categories including structure of the day; activities and experience; physical environment; play equipment; learning; physical needs; health and safety; and interactions. Ratings for all programs are posted on the Children's Services website

[www.toronto.ca/children](http://www.toronto.ca/children)). In addition, areas such as nutrition, centre management and playgrounds are rated. A rating of “Level 3—meets criteria” is required to maintain contract status with City of Toronto.

### ► **Emerging Issues**

As part of its planning for the future, the City must prepare for the impact of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds which the Province has pledged to begin introducing in 2010. Implementation of full-day learning could have profound impacts on both the child care system and out-of-school-time programs. Depending on the model adopted by the Province, the responsibility for providing after-school care could shift substantially. There are also potential implications for the ongoing funding of the child care system and for availability of space in schools to operate child care programs. These are issues which the City will have to address as implementation proceeds.

Although the capacity of the licensed child care system grew by more than 1,100 school age spaces over the last four years, the supply is not adequate or evenly distributed across the City's neighbourhoods. In addition, funding is not available to accommodate all the families that require assistance with their child care costs; almost 3,800 school-aged children are currently on the waiting list for subsidy.

### **Parks, Forestry and Recreation**

Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) is a major provider of out-of-school-time programs for children. PFR, in partnership with Children's Services, operates the After-school Recreation Care (ARC) program in priority neighbourhoods. This innovative program provides supervised care and recreation activities for school-age children as well as employment opportunities for local youth. Currently more than 650 children are registered for ARC programs in 27 locations. The programs operate Monday to Friday from school dismissal to 6 pm and offer a variety of activities including outdoor play, games, drama, arts and crafts and homework help. The pillars of the ARC curriculum are resiliency, character education, fine arts, outdoor play and physical activity. Staff receive enhanced training through an innovative partnership with Seneca College. In addition to ARC, PFR also offers at least 33 five-day-a-week after-school and homework programs in 15 different locations, serving 850 children.

In the before-school period in 2008, PFR ran 16 programs, which had an average attendance of 77 children per week. PFR also ran seven breakfast programs in various parts of the City which operated five days a week.

During the summer PFR operates full-day camp programs which in the summer of 2008, served a total of 20,622 children. The average weekly registration was 7,382 children, and the highest weekly registration was 9,638. Another 1,322 children registered for part-day camp programs in 2008. During March Break in 2008, 3,553 children registered for full-day programs; another 133 registered for part-day program.

The division has a wide range of other program options for school-age children. In 2008, there were more than 264,300 registrations of children aged 6 – 12 in activity and skill development programs while there were more than 2.1 million uses of drop-in programs during the course of a year by children in their middle years. Many, but not all of these programs, operate in the out-of-school time periods. Attendance at these programs is generally not monitored to the same extent as more formal programs.

Registration and attendance in programs for children 13 years of age and older decrease once families have less need for supervised out-of-school care. Children who have regularly attended recreation programs and who have developed strong relationships with their families are more likely to choose to stay involved in recreation activities outside of school. This continuum of healthy involvement in recreation can lead to continued relationships with caring adults, promotion of resiliency, social networking, leadership opportunities and possible employment.

### ► **Funding**

Recreation programs are funded by the City from property tax revenues and through user fees. Toronto currently has two financial access programs to ensure fee-based recreation services are accessible to low income residents. The Welcome Policy is the financial access mechanism for individuals. The policy enables eligible Toronto residents who have incomes under the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off levels to register in a limited number of Parks, Forestry and Recreation programs free of charge, regardless of the participant's age or program location.

Priority Centres are designed to exempt high need communities from paying user fees for all recreation programs in those centres. In 1999, Council designated 25 locations in high-needs neighbourhoods of the city where programs would be offered free of charge. At present, there are 21 Priority Centres.

While ARC is a model of intersectoral collaboration and is providing quality programs in under-served neighbourhoods, it has not yet achieved financial sustainability. The original funding and fee model

developed for After-school Recreation Care program projected a total of 60 sites and 3,600 spaces for after school recreation and care. It was expected that sites would be phased in over three years and would be fully sustainable through parent fees. In 2006 funding of \$3.7 million from the Social Services Stabilization Reserve fund was allocated to the Children's Services Operating Budget for the purpose of start up of ARC and to offset parent fees. In June 2010 it is anticipated that these funds will be depleted.

Currently the full cost of an ARC space is \$14 per day and the parent's contribution to this is \$5 per day. Even with this reduced fee, families, community partners and staff continue to report that fees are a barrier to accessing service. For many families in priority neighbourhoods even a small fee makes the ARC program inaccessible. Many families are eligible for child care subsidy and Welcome Policy and some have been able to access these supports, however, lengthy waiting lists for child care fee subsidy make this option difficult to access. (In 2000, the Province passed a regulation allowing for child care fee subsidy funding to be directed to recreation programs that meet prescribed minimum requirements.)

#### ► **Regulation and Quality Assurance**

High Five is an accreditation and training standard for recreation programs and their staff. The process is based on five principles of healthy child development: a caring adult; opportunities to play; make friends; master skills and participate. High Five was developed by Parks and Recreation Ontario, and has been adopted for use for City of Toronto recreation programs. It is recognized nationally as a standard of quality assurance, enabling the City to pay fee subsidies to families using recreation programs for school-age child care.

#### ► **Emerging Issues**

Parks, Forestry and Recreation will begin work in 2009 on developing a service plan that will identify current service levels; articulate the diverse recreation and leisure needs of the city's many communities; provide a basis for decision-making; and establish priorities and principles for investments. When completed, the service plan will provide more specific insight into the service needs and programs available for school-age children in various parts of the city.

#### **Other City Program Areas**

While this framework focuses primarily on programming for children in their middle childhood years managed or delivered by Children's Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the very significant role of other City program areas in serving this age group must be recognized.

Toronto Cultural Services, through the local arts service organizations and other community partners, funds and supports an array of programs that enrich the lives of children in their middle childhood years. These include visual arts, music, drama, literary, digital and multi-media art classes and workshops that cover a range of age groupings and are offered in a variety of settings. Additionally, Cultural Services directly delivers March Break and summer camp programs at its museum sites and arts centres.

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) provides a wealth of program opportunities for children in their middle years. Although they are not specifically intended to provide care, these programs provide a range of out-of-school-time activities for children, including help with homework, one-on-one tutoring and summer programs such as the TD Summer Reading Club and English Can Be Fun which helps newcomer children improve their English skills. In addition to the programs offered by TPL, the library's rich resources including books, CDs, and DVDs are available for children to borrow. There are also on-line resources available through the library's website which can be accessed at home bringing the library into children's lives whenever they want.

Toronto Public Health offers a range of resources and programs that support the healthy development of children in their middle years. These include fitness, safety and injury prevention programs, as well as, At Home Alone— a program which helps children prepare for being at home without adult supervision.

### **School and Community Programs**

Schools offer a wide array of extracurricular activities such as sports and international language programs outside of school hours. A host of community organizations and clubs also provide cultural, sports and other kinds of skill development opportunities. The City, through the Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) is a major funder of some of these organizations such as boys' and girls' clubs and local arts organizations. Some programs have an explicit aspect of care, e.g. monitoring attendance and transitions. Others do not.

## **PROGRAM INVENTORY**

Despite the wide variety of options offered by the City, school boards and community organizations, evidence suggests that there are not enough programs to meet the demand for service.

A recent survey conducted by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPCT) in partnership with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC) gives a more detailed picture of after school programming options than had been previously available. Although it deals only with five-day-a-week after-school programs, it provides insight into the type, location and usage of these programs. Titled “Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children in Toronto,” the report identifies 534 full-week after-school programs with a total operating capacity of 18,205 children, suggesting that only 9.5 per cent of Toronto children have access to full-week after school programs. This number does not account for the many children whose families do not require care or who piece together a variety of care and activity options to provide full-week coverage but it does suggest that many children in this city do not have access to adequate care and developmental opportunities in the out-of-school-time hours. See Appendix I for more detailed information from the survey.

The report breaks down the programs by type. It points out that most of the full-week programs and the majority of the program spaces are part of the child care system:

85% (or 457) are part of the licensed child care system in Toronto and accounting for 15,041 (82%) of the operating capacity of the available full-week after school programs. These licensed child care centres are located in elementary schools operated by the Toronto school boards, the YMCA and other non-profit organizations. This means that 8% of the 192,730 middle childhood years’ children living in Toronto have access to the City of Toronto licensed child care system.

The study also reveals that programs are not distributed equitably across the city. Currently there is a concentration of programs in the old City of Toronto with many fewer options in parts of Etobicoke, Scarborough and North York. If a program is not conveniently located it cannot adequately serve the needs of families.

Although the survey increases our understanding of the situation, the information on programs for 6-12 year olds remains fragmentary. The next stage in the development of a Middle Childhood Strategy will

entail building on the research work of the MCMC and others to develop a fuller picture of out-of-school-time programs and the needs of families.

### **LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A MIDDLE CHILDHOOD STRATEGY**

As the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy proceeds, more work will be done to examine the barriers that impede access to service and the steps required to develop a coordinated, financially sustainable system of out-of-school-time programs.

The CSPCT-MCMC survey demonstrates that programs are not equitably distributed across the city. If programs are not within easy reach in the after-school or March and summer break periods, they will not serve family needs. Affordability is another barrier. The cost of school-age child care programs ranges between \$16 and more than \$34 per day which is difficult to afford for many families without subsidy. Even the \$5-a day fee charged for ARC programs seems to be a significant deterrent to many low-income families in priority neighbourhoods. New funding and subsidy options need to be explored.

Program content may also be a barrier to access. Not all programs have a range of activities which are suitable for the varying interests and developmental stages of children between six and twelve. In this age group, clearly one size does not fit all. Children will not be happy in a program which doesn't match their level of development or appeal to their interests. Developing programs that cater to different age groupings is an important step towards fuller engagement and participation.

Similarly, programs will not be useful to families if they do not reflect the ethno-racial realities of the community in which they operate. Local service planning must recognize the importance of understanding the make-up of individual neighbourhoods and developing programs that are sensitive to their cultural norms.

There are many aspects to inclusive programming. For example, it is important to ensure that children with special needs are supported to participate in programs in the neighbourhoods in which they live. Meeting the challenges faced by vulnerable children, living in difficult family situations or experiencing homelessness or other deprivations, must also be part of the design of programs.

Discussions with community stakeholders reinforce the need to transform a fragmented set of programs, which are often not accessible or useful to families, into a more effective and comprehensive system with a greater range of program options. To help guide this transformation a set of principles



has been developed to serve as the foundation of the Middle Childhood Strategy. The principles include the recognition of the significance of the middle childhood years; high quality; funding sustainability; intersectoral coordination; inclusion, access and equity; and ongoing evaluation.

Of these principles, high quality is the cornerstone. The conversations with service providers and others have helped to more clearly define what constitutes quality. While recognizing that program content and objectives are different in different service sectors, and for different age groups, stakeholders identified a set of elements of quality that should be common to all programs. These include safety, developmental appropriateness, inclusiveness, ethno-racial relevance, staffing strategies, group size, health, nutrition and well being, and parental information.

From the guiding principles—and the elaboration of elements of program quality—a set of proposed directions was developed. These are the action steps being recommended to City Council to help move the Middle Childhood Strategy forward.

The directions are based on three assumptions:

- That the City has the primary role as systems planner and manager for out-of school-time programs. The City ensures equitable access to a range of programs through divisional service planning and through interdivisional collaboration.
- That Toronto's Best Start Network (BSN) should be recognized as the appropriate forum in which the various children's services sectors can discuss local service planning and coordination issues.\*
- That the process of program planning and delivery should determine the content and quality assurance mechanisms of programs, encompassing such issues as quality assurance, safety and staffing.

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\* The BSN is the intersectoral network which is responsible for coordinating the planning of services that affect children 0-12 years in Toronto. Funded by the provincial government as part of the Best Start Initiative, the BSN is co-chaired by the General Manager of Children's Services and a community representative and supported by City staff.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Through our community engagement with service providers, the Children's Services Advisory Committee and City of Toronto staff, a set of guiding principles have been developed as part of the framework for a Middle Childhood Strategy. These are the principles that are proposed to inform future decision-making and resource allocation relating to out-of-school-time programs.

### **1. Developmental significance of middle childhood years**

- Helping children develop new skills and become more resilient and independent as they make the transition to adolescence is a key objective of out-of-school-time programs.

### **2. High quality programming**

- Programs should strive to provide high-quality service to meet the needs of children and families. [See the Elements of High Quality Programs, page 15]

### **3. Funding sustainability**

- Adequate, ongoing funding to ensure consistency in staffing and program delivery to meet local needs.

### **4. Collaboration and coordination for local service planning and delivery**

- Working together within communities to ensure an appropriate range and mix of programs are available.
- Joint planning to coordinate service delivery in local neighbourhoods.

### **5. Inclusion, access and equity**

- All families should have access to high-quality affordable out-of-school time programs.
- Flexible funding options, including subsidies to ensure income doesn't become a barrier to access.

### **6. Setting standards and ongoing evaluation**

- Appropriate quality standards and measures based on program outcomes should be established.
- The quality of programs must be regularly monitored and evaluated.

## **ELEMENTS OF HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS**

The stakeholder engagement sessions also attempted to define in greater detail some of the specific elements that are prerequisite to high quality programming. To be effective programs must be adequately resourced and must balance the needs and interests of children and their families. Although there will be considerable variation in program design and regulatory frameworks, all programs should include these elements:

### **1. Safety**

- Supervision through an appropriate ratio of adults to children.
- Attendance should be recorded to ensure safe transitions to and from the program.
- Locations and facilities should be appropriate to the program.

### **2. Developmental appropriateness**

- Programs should be age appropriate and promote the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of a child's development.

### **3. Inclusiveness**

- Programs should respond to the particular abilities, needs and strengths of the children they serve.

### **4. Ethno-racial relevance**

- Programs should reflect the cultural norms and activities of the communities they serve.

### **5. Appropriate staffing strategies**

- Staff should be well trained in accordance with the standards and characteristics of the programs they are delivering.
- Staff should reflect the diversity of the communities in which they work.

### **6. Appropriate group size and composition**

- Ratios should be small enough to ensure positive interactions and learning but large enough so programs are financially viable.

### **7. Health, nutrition and well being**

- Programs should contribute to healthy food choices, good nutrition and personal health and wellness.

### **8. Parental information**

- Families should be well-informed about program design and objectives so they can make good program choices and know what to expect.

### **9. Program evaluation**

- Evaluation frameworks and standards should be based on defined goals and program outcomes.

## **PROPOSED DIRECTIONS**

The guiding principles identified in this strategy suggest a set of directions which will be further developed as part of the Middle Childhood Strategy. It is proposed that the City of Toronto acknowledge the particular and various developmental needs of children between 6 and 12 and lead the development of high quality, age-appropriate programs that enable children in this age group to learn new skills and make the transition to maturity and independence in a safe environment. Activity should be focused in three areas:

### **1. Systems Planning**

The primary role of the City of Toronto in the system planning and management of middle childhood years programs should be re-affirmed. This role involves planning and oversight of programs delivered directly by the City, funded by the City or delivered in City-owned facilities and entails a range of accountabilities and responsibilities to other governments and the community. This planning and oversight must be carried out in a manner that is responsive to existing community needs and City priorities. Fundamental to the City role is the development and implementation of multi-year divisional service plans which should be, to the greatest extent possible, aligned with each other to ensure there is equitable access to out-of-school-time programs in terms of affordability for low-income families, location, ethno-racial and developmental appropriateness, and serving children with special needs.

### **2. Local Service Planning Forum**

The ongoing role of the Best Start Network (BSN) as a forum for the discussion of local service planning issues should be recognized. The BSN enables intersectoral planning activities that include:

- Bringing together service providers and system stakeholders including provincial, City and school board officials and community-based organization to develop consensus on the principles and directions guiding the enhancement of out-of-school-time programs.
- Working with community partners to build on existing research to determine more precisely the extent and nature of existing out-of-school-time programming and the need for expanded programming.
- Exploring ways in which the greater coordination of out-of-school-time programs can help ensure ongoing financial sustainability and optimal impact.

### **3. Program Planning and Delivery**

As part of the process of the process of planning and delivery, City program areas serving children should:

- Commit to developing the full range of out-of-school-time program models and options that reflect children’s varying developmental, learning, care and activity needs.
- Recognize that, while there will continue to be differences in regulatory and funding regimes, all programs should be high-quality, accessible, and inclusive.
- Ensure that standards are embedded in program design, addressing such issues as:
  - Child safety and safe transitions to and from programs
  - Staff-to-child ratios
  - Staff qualifications and training
  - Expectations of program quality
  - Processes for evaluating program quality.

## APPENDIX I — AN INVENTORY OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

“Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children in Toronto,” is a report released in January 2009 by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPCT) in partnership with the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition (MCMC). The report contains the findings of a survey conducted between November 2007 and February 2008.

The report notes that, according to the 2006 Census, there are 192,525 children aged six to twelve living in Toronto. It further notes that the two major Toronto school boards had a combined enrolment of 173,437 children in this age group during the 2006-07 school year. (The Toronto District School Board accounted for 128,731 students; the Toronto Catholic District School Board had 44,706). A total of 68 organizations operating 735 after-school programs completed the survey questionnaire. The report identifies 534 full-week after-school programs with a total operating capacity of 18,205 children, suggesting that only 9.5 per cent of Toronto children have access to full-week after school programs

The report breaks down the availability of programs by former municipality.

**Full-Week After-School Program Capacity  
Relative to Population 6-12 Years by Former Municipality**

Former Municipality	Number of Children 6-12 years	Number of Program Spaces	% of Children 6-12 Years	% of Program Spaces	% of Children 6-12 Years that can be Accommodated in Programs
East York	9,440	729	4.9	4.0	7.7
Etobicoke	27,795	2,434	14.4	13.4	8.8
North York	50,585	4,665	26.3	25.6	9.2
Scarborough	53,505	3,723	27.8	20.5	7.0
Toronto (old city)	39,170	5,666	20.4	31.1	14.5
York	12,030	988	6.3	5.4	8.2
<b>Total City of Toronto</b>	<b>192,525</b>	<b>18,205</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9.5</b>

Source: Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children in Toronto

The report also breaks down the programs by type and provider. It points out that most of the full-week programs and the majority of the program spaces are part of the child care system:

85% (or 457) are part of the licensed child care system in Toronto and accounting for 15,041 (82%) of the operating capacity of the available full-week after school programs. These licensed child care centres are located in elementary schools operated by the

Toronto school boards, the YMCA and other non-profit organizations. This means that 8% of the 192,730 middle childhood years' children living in Toronto have access to the City of Toronto licensed child care system.

### List of Respondents Offering Full-Week After-School Programs for Children 6–12 Years

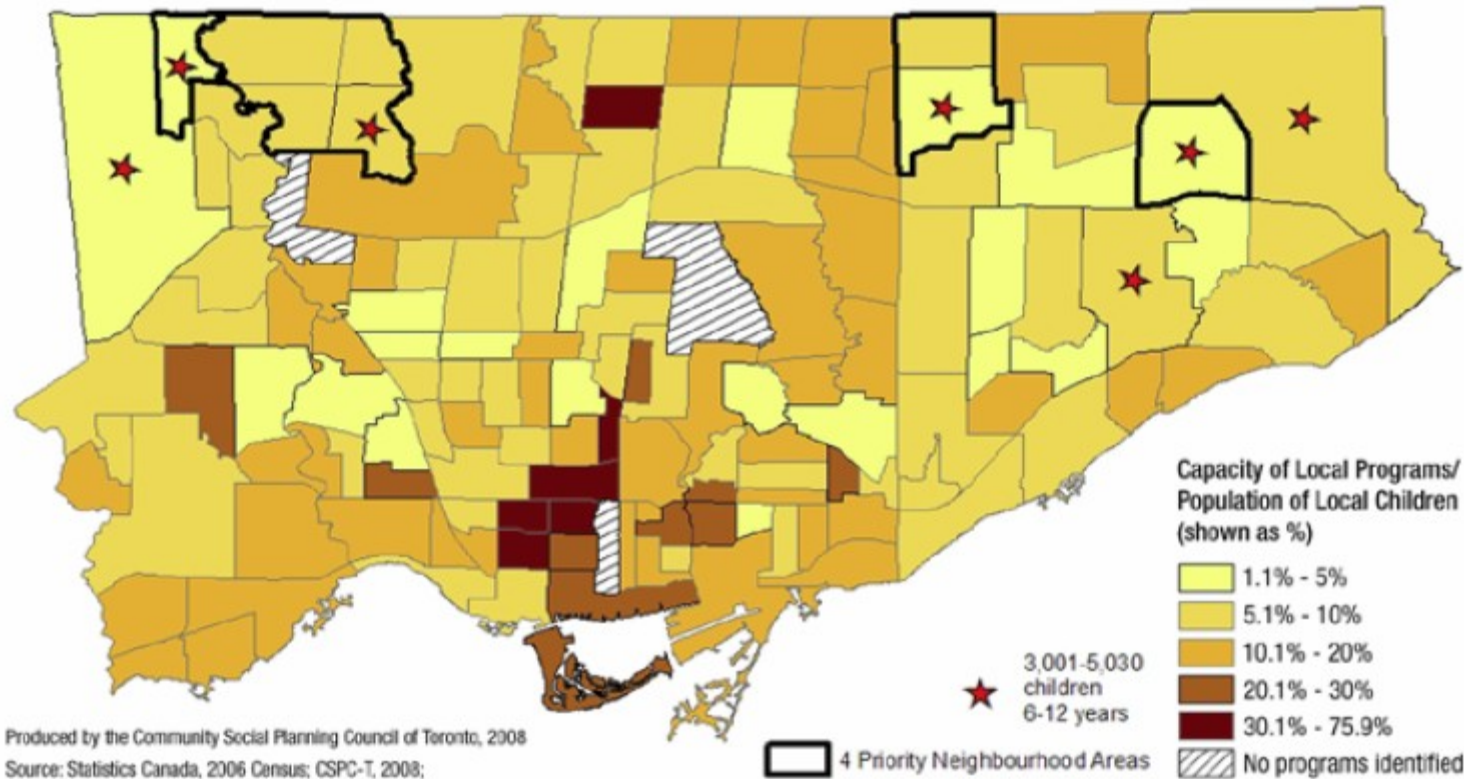
Agency Name	Program Type	Number of Programs
Albion Boys & Girls Club	Homework Club	1
Antibes Community Centre	After-school & Homework Club	1
Beyond Academics	Homework Club	1
Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough	After-school Program	7
Childspace II	After-school Program	1
Community-based licensed child care centres	Child Care	456
Falstaff Community Centre	After-school Program	1
Harbourfront Community Centre	After-school Program	1
Kidztown (Salvation Army)	Homework Club	1
Martin Luther Church	After-school Program	1
Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre	After-school Program	1
Norwood Academy	Homework Club	1
Perth Child Care	After-school Program	1
St. Albans Boys & Girls Club	After-school Program	1
St. Bernadette Family Resource Centre	After-school Program	1
St. Christopher House	After-school Program	3
Toronto Community Housing Corporation	After-school Program	6
Toronto Kiwanis Boys & Girls Club	After-school Program	2
Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation	After Four, ARC, Homework Club, Young Leaders, After-school Programs	42
Upper Canada Child Care	After-school Program	1
West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre	After-school Program	4

**Total** **534**

Source: Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children in Toronto

The CSPCT-MCMC study reveals that programs are not distributed equitably across the city. Currently there is a concentration of programs in the old City of Toronto with many fewer options in parts of Etobicoke, Scarborough and North York.

**Percentage of Children 6-12 Years that can be Accommodated by Local After-School Programs in Toronto**



Produced by the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2008

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census; CSPC-T, 2008;  
City of Toronto, Neighbourhood Planning Areas Version 2

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**Source: Middle Childhood Matters: An Inventory of Full-Week After-School Programs for Children in Toronto**