



**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Updates on the Development of the Middle Childhood Strategy  
and on After-School Recreation Care Programs**

<b>Date:</b>	May 12, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Children’s Services and General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the status of the middle childhood strategy which is intended to guide the development of a high-quality system of out-of-school-time programs for children aged 6–12. The report proposes that the strategy development be led by a work group of City, school board staff and community stakeholders reporting to the General Managers of Children’s Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The report also provides an update on the ARC/After-School Recreation Care program and provides a recommendation for consideration for continued funding and program expansion outside of the Priority Neighbourhoods.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The General Managers of Children’s Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommend that:**

- 1) the General Managers of Children's Services and Parks Forestry and Recreation report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in 2011 on the Middle Childhood Strategy and Implementation Plan; and
- 2) the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation develop a business case for consideration during the 2011 operating budget process that would ensure the continuation of the current After-School Recreation Care programs and include expansion into new communities, outside of the Priority Neighbourhoods including cost recovery model.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

This report has no 2010 financial implications. The total budgeted cost of the program for 2010 is \$1,896,732.00 with \$365,000.00 received in registration fees as well as \$699,732.00 received from The Ministry of Health Promotion, Ontario's After-School Initiative Fund and \$832,000.00 contributed from the Social Service Stabilization Reserve Fund.

With anticipated registration fees, continued funding from The Ministry of Health Promotion and the balance of the Reserve Fund the current programs will continue until June 2011. If expected support from The Ministry of Health Promotion is not received for the September 2010 – June 2011, funding for the program would be limited to registration fees estimated at \$190,000.00 (\$3.00 per child per day) and the remaining \$480,000.00 in the Social Service Stabilization Reserve Fund. As a result the ARC programs would cease to operate as of December 2010.

Future expansion of ARC beyond the priority neighbourhoods will require a funding model to ensure full cost recovery. A business case with options for continuation and expansion of the ARC programs, including a cost recovery model, will be submitted for consideration as part of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation 2011 Operating Budget submission.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

The objective of the Middle Childhood Strategy is to guide the development of a system of out-of-school-time programs for children aged six to twelve. There are currently not enough middle childhood programs to meet the needs of Toronto families and those that do exist are not distributed equitably across the city. Among the guiding principles of the strategy is that all families should have access to high-quality, affordable, age-appropriate out-of-school-time programs and that flexible funding options, including subsidies be in place to ensure that income is not a barrier to access. Similarly, the After-School Recreation Care programs build equity of service access by providing affordable after school programs to children in the City's priority neighbourhoods, where registration costs will be \$3.00 per day beginning in Fall 2010, with Welcome Policy available for those families eligible to ensure free access to programs.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

### **Middle Childhood Programs**

The issue of school age care was highlighted in the City's 2005–2009 Child Care Service Plan, and the *Best Generation Yet* considered by Council at its meetings of May 17, 18, 19, and 20, 2005 and July 19, 20, and 21, 2005 respectively. Both documents committed the City to the care needs of school age children during out-of school hours including professional activity days and holidays.

See: [http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/council\\_rpt\\_servplan05.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/council_rpt_servplan05.pdf)  
<http://www.toronto.ca/children/pdf/bestgenerationyet.pdf>

## **Middle Childhood Strategy**

In August 2009, Council approved the Middle Childhood Strategy Framework and directed staff to report back on implementation and to gather additional data on existing out-of-school-time programs.

See: Community Development and Recreation Committee CD 25.4, “Middle Childhood Strategy Framework “(August 5 and 6, 2009) <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-08-05-cc38-dd.htm>

## **After-School Recreation Care Program**

In November 2005, City Council approved the development of a model after-school recreation and care program to address child care and recreation needs of children aged six to twelve years of age in vulnerable communities.

See: City Council, Policy & Finance Committee., Report 9, Clause 32a, “Meeting the Needs of School Aged Children through a Child Care and Recreation Service Model” (November 24, 2005) <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc051124/pofcl032a.pdf>

Staff reported to Council of progress of planning and implementing the After School Recreation and Care programs in July 2006.

See: Policy and Finance Committee, Report 6, Clause 3, “After-School Recreation and Care Program” (July 25, 26 and 27, 2006), <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060725/pof6rpt/cl031.pdf>

City Council approved the acceptance of funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion and directed staff to report to Community Development and Recreation Committee in the spring of 2010 on the future funding options and viability of the After-School Recreation and Care programs.

See: Community Development and Recreation Committee report CD 26.3, “Ministry of Health Promotion Funding Agreement to Expand and Enhance After-School Recreation Care Programs” (September 30 and October 1, 2009) <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-09-30-cc40-dd.htm>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

### **Middle-Childhood Programs**

The City of Toronto has long been concerned about “out-of-school-time” programs for children between the ages of 6 and 12. These programs provide care and other benefits in periods that are not supervised by teachers and during which parents require care. They include before- and after-school periods as well as longer stretches such as summer holidays, March Break, and professional activity days. Children in the 6–12 age group are in their “middle childhood years.” Families with children in their middle years often contend with a patchwork of services that may not always be accessible, affordable or developmentally appropriate.

The City is the system manager for the child care sector which includes subsidized care for children in after-school programs. The City, through Parks Forestry and Recreation, also provides a wide range of instructional, drop-in and summer camp programs for children in this age group. It

also operates the After-School Recreation Care (ARC) programs which will be discussed in this report. Other city divisions offer programming in the out-of-school-time periods and funding to community organizations to provide middle-childhood services.

### **Middle Childhood Strategy**

To promote the development of a more rational system of high-quality, age-appropriate, out-of-school-time programs, the City is developing a Middle Childhood Strategy (MCS). As a first step in the process, City Council adopted a Middle Childhood Strategy Framework in August 2009. 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. The document lays out guiding principles (see Attachment 1), describes elements of high quality programs (see Attachment 2) and proposes directions towards achieving a Middle Childhood Strategy.

The key direction of the strategy is based on the premise that the City has the primary role as systems planner and manager for out-of school-time programs and must ensure equitable access to a range of programs through divisional service planning and interdivisional collaboration.

In adopting the strategy framework, City Council directed that further research be conducted on the needs of families for high quality programs for children aged six to twelve and on the current distribution and nature of existing programs.

### **After-School Recreation Care (ARC)**

A prime example of interdivisional collaboration in the area has been the After-School Recreation Care programs. Parks Forestry and Recreation, working in collaboration with Children’s Services developed and implemented the ARC program model to address the child care and recreation needs of children six to twelve years old, living in vulnerable communities and to provide increased opportunities for youth mentoring and employment. The program model includes an innovative partnership with Seneca College to provide enhanced training, apprenticeship and education opportunities for over 140 youth employed in this program. In 2008, the ARC Programs received The Public Sector Quality Fair-Gold Level Award.

Funding of \$3.7 million from the Social Service Stabilization Reserve Fund was allocated to the 2006 Children’s Services Operating budget for ARC. In October 2009 the City received funding of nearly \$699, 732 from the Ministry of Health Promotion, Ontario After-School After-School Strategy. This funding is supporting to lower registration fees and enhancing the program curriculum during the 2009-2010 ARC session. The reduction of registration fees from \$6.00 per day to \$2.00 per day/per child allows families eligible for recreation subsidies under the Welcome Policy to access ARC free of charge by using their general program entitlement each season. This helps reduce the fee barrier to families accessing this service for their school-age children.

### **Introduction of Full-Day Learning**

The development of Middle Childhood Strategy must be understood in the context of the implementation of full-day early learning program throughout the province. The report of Charles Pascal, the Premier’s Early Learning Advisor, recommended that school boards be mandated to offer out-of-school-time programs for children aged four to twelve. The report, released in June Updates on the Development of the Middle Childhood Strategy and on After-School Recreation Care Programs

2009, proposed fee-based “extended-day” programs operated by school boards for children aged four to eight, and after-school programs for children aged nine to twelve operated by the boards, municipalities or community partners. The Pascal report also recommended fee-based extended-day programming that operates 50 weeks a year, including activities during school breaks and summer vacations.

In October 2009, the provincial government announced that it is phasing in over five years full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, including the option of a fee-based extended-day program, operating before and after school on instructional days. The announcement provided no direction for extended day program for 6 to 12 year olds.

## **COMMENTS**

### **Middle Childhood Strategy**

Since the announcement of the Early Learning Program in late October there has been intense activity by provincial, school board and municipal officials to plan the orderly phase-in of full-day learning and optional extended-day programs for four and five year olds. Although focused on the needs of four and five year olds, the introduction of full-day learning has the potential to usher in a new era of out-of-school-time care for all children. Provincial government intentions and timelines, however, remain unclear. Although the government has, through the passage of Bill 242, enabled school boards to introduce out-of-school time programs for children aged six to twelve, it has not mandated them to do so.

The possibility that year-round out-of-school-time programs for children aged four to twelve may eventually become the responsibility of school boards has significant implications for the development of a City of Toronto middle childhood strategy. Although the intense focus on the implementation of the Early Learning Program during the past six months has slowed development of the middle-childhood strategy, work continues to shape a new model and program standards for middle-childhood programs. This initiative has become particularly important as we move incrementally to a system of integrated services for children and families.

This report recommends that work be led by a working group composed of staff from Children’s Services, Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Community Housing, four Toronto school boards, and community stakeholders. City staff from the work group would report to the General Managers of Children’s Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The report also recommends that during the planning process there is broader consultation with community stakeholders through existing networks, including the Best Start Network, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, Child Care Advisory Committee, Middle Childhood Matters Coalition and the City Kids Network.

The initial tasks of the work group will be to implement the direction given by City Council in August 2009, including an environmental scan of the needs of families, research into the current distribution of out-of-school-time programs, identification of any service gaps which may exist and the development of a database of after-school programs for middle-years children including information on program cost, accessibility for children with special needs, program quality, cultural-appropriateness of programs and identification of school-based programs. Gathering this information is underway with the distribution of a survey to community agencies which are funded by the City’s community partnership and investment programs.

The working group will also develop key indicators of program quality that would be applicable to a full range of out-of-school-time programs. These indicators will draw on the elements of high quality programs identified in the Strategy Framework report. (See Attachment 2). The working group will ensure that the strategy as it is developed is aligned with the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan and the forthcoming city-wide Recreation Service Plan.

Underlying the development of the middle childhood strategy is the common desire to achieve a comprehensive and integrated system of out-of-school-time care for children. This report recommends that Council mandate the general managers of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Children's Service to work with their counterparts at the Toronto Public Library, the local school boards, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to ensure that progress towards achieving this vision continues.

The two general managers will report to Community Development and Recreation Committee in the 2011 with a recommended Middle Childhood Strategy and proposed implementation strategy.

### **After-School Recreation Care Programs**

As of April 2010 there are 29 ARC programs operating in the 13 priority neighbourhoods. Programs provide after-school recreation care for up to 860 children daily and employ more than 140 youth, five days per week for 10 months of the year. ARC locations were phased in over three years beginning in September 2006. The ARC programs are currently in their fourth year of operation and it is clear the funding model is not sustainable. The current fee of \$2.00 per day/per child is achieved through City funding (from the Social Services Reserve Stabilization Fund) and provincial funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion (MOHP) through the Ontario After-School Initiative. The full cost for ARC service is approximately \$15.00 per day, per child. Registration fees will increase to \$3.00 per day per child for the September 2010-June 2011 session.

The Ministry of Health Promotion has advised that funding for the ARC programs for the 2010-2011 program session will be renewed although written confirmation is not expected until early June 2010. With the anticipated funding, combined with the remaining funds from the Social Services Reserve Stabilization Fund, the ARC programs can continue to operate at their current capacity until June 2011. After June 2011, however, the City would not have sufficient resources to continue service. A communication plan will be prepared in advance to advise families and staff members of the intended exit strategy if one becomes necessary.

If MOHP does not make a funding commitment for the 2010-2011 school year, the available ARC funds will support the program until December 2010. With no further funding, the ARC programs will cease to operate December 2010. Again, a Communication Plan will be developed to advise families and staff of the intended exit strategy.

The ARC programs have been a success in providing both age-appropriate programming for children and employment opportunities for local youth. ARC has the potential to be one model for a future system of quality out-of-school-time programs. However, to continue operation and expand the programs ARC requires a new model of funding. The most viable option would include expansion of the programs beyond the priority neighbourhoods where they now operate into mixed-income areas where programs can operate on a cost-recovery basis. Expanding ARC's reach

and revenue base could contribute to decreasing the financial barriers for families unable to pay and offer programs to a broader full fee paying clientele. The combination of client fees, City contribution of funding and continued provincial funding would help to ensure the future of the ARC programs.

This report recommends that the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation develop a business case for consideration during for the 2011 operating budget process that would ensure the continuation of the current ARC programs and include expansion into new communities, outside of the Priority Neighbourhoods as well as outline a cost recovery model.

## **CONCLUSION**

As out-of-school-time programs enter a period of transition, it is important that work continue on new program models of accessible, age-appropriate, high quality programs for children in their middle years. Developing a broad middle-childhood strategy and ensuring the continuation of the ARC programs are two important components of that work.

## **CONTACT**

Lorraine McLeod  
Program Manager  
Children's Services  
Tel: 416-397-7605  
Email: [lmcleod2@toronto.ca](mailto:lmcleod2@toronto.ca)

Janet Hilts  
Acting Manager  
Children's Initiatives/ Quality Assurance  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation  
Tel: 416-396-4228  
Email: [jlhills@toronto.ca](mailto:jlhills@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Elaine Baxter-Trahair  
General Manager  
Children's Services

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Brenda Patterson  
General Manager  
Parks, Forestry & Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 — Guiding Principles  
Attachment 2 — Elements of High Quality Programs

## **Attachment 1 — Guiding Principles**

(from the Middle Childhood Strategy Framework, adopted by City Council, August 5 and 6, 2009)

The guiding principles adopted by City Council to guide the development of middle childhood programs were:

- 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.
- 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



## **Attachment 2 — Elements of High Quality Programs**

(from the Middle Childhood Strategy Framework, adopted by City Council, August 5 and 6, 2009)

### **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.