



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan

Date:	May 8, 2013
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report introduces The Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan, *A Time for Action* (attached). It has been developed to outline how the Middle Childhood Strategy, adopted by Council in October 2012, will be put into action.

Across Toronto, six to 12-year old children participate in a variety of out-of-school time programs delivered by a wide range of service providers, and financed through a variety of mechanisms. The current compilation of out-of-school time providers and funders leads to a fragmented and uncoordinated system of programs with varying degrees of quality. As a result, this system is hard to navigate and difficult to sustain. The Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy sets out the broad goals needed to guide the development of a more effective, coordinated and high quality system. The Implementation Plan outlines specific tasks for each of the strategy's goals and identifies timelines to ensure progress and action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan, *A Time for Action*, attached to this report as Appendix A; and

2. the General Manager of Children's Services in partnership with the General Manager, Parks Forestry & Recreation, work with Province of Ontario officials across Ministries to explore and align funding opportunities to stabilize and support a system of out-of-school time programming for children aged six to 12.

Financial Impact

This report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the 2013 operating budget for Children's Services.

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 12 years. Currently, many Toronto families have difficulty accessing quality middle childhood programs, primarily because they are not distributed equitably across the city. A guiding principle of the Strategy is that all families should have access to high-quality, affordable, age appropriate out-of-school-time programs. Accordingly, the Strategy includes action items that address various barriers to access, such as affordability, inclusive programming content, integrated models of service delivery and planning tools that attend to service gaps and inequities.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 30, 2012 and November 1, 2012, City Council adopted the Middle Childhood Strategy as presented by the General Manager, Children's Services and the General Manager, Parks Forestry & Recreation. The Staff Report also outlined the status of funding for the After School Recreation Program (ARC) delivered by Parks Forestry & Recreation.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD16.2>

In adopting the Middle Childhood Strategy, City Council requested the General Manager, Children's Services, to report to the May 23, 2013 meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee with an implementation plan, including timelines and proposed financing strategies and addressing implications of the new provincial funding formula for child care on the Middle Childhood Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD16.2>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

City staff have been considering and reporting on the out-of- school time program needs of children aged six to 12 years for the last decade. Although school plays a significant role in a child's life, it is important to recognize that much of a child's day is spent outside

the classroom. This includes periods before school begins for the day and after it ends, summer holidays, March Break, holidays and professional activity days. Keeping children safe and engaged during these times is a critical concern for families and service providers. Increasingly, research is demonstrating the positive impact that well implemented, high quality out-of-school time programs have on the social and emotional well-being and on the academic and health outcomes of children in this age group.

The landscape of programming for six to 12 year-olds in Toronto is highly complex, involving multiple service providers, funders and stakeholders. According to the 2011 Statistics Canada Census, there are approximately 179,205 children between the ages of six and 12 years living in Toronto. The current capacity or number of spaces available through licensed child care for this age group is 16,002, representing less than 9% of the population. After School Recreation and Care (ARC) programs continue to be an important quality model of recreation based after- school programming that will serve as a tool in advancing the Middle Childhood Strategy. These programs currently provide equitable access to care for an additional 865 children daily.

Although licensed child care and the ARC program meet the out of school time needs for some families and will continue to be integral components in the system, the Middle Childhood Strategy goes beyond to include the full range of service providers who also deliver out-of-school time programs. The action required to achieve the strategy's five strategic goals will require the collective effort of all stakeholders. The timing of this work is ideal as it puts the City in a position to influence the Government of Ontario in its plan to make changes to the Day Nurseries Act (DNA) as it relates to this age group.

The Middle Childhood Strategy identifies the following five key goals:

Goal 1: Develop a comprehensive and integrated system of services for children aged six to 12.

- To respond to the fragmented system of out-of-school time programming, governments, service providers and community partners need to collaborate to align policies, planning approaches and processes to create a comprehensive system of services for children and families.

Goal 2: Improve Local Service Coordination and Planning

- Develop tools to support local planning and explore new models of service delivery to create an efficient and seamless approach to providing out-of-school-time programs.

Goal 3: Advance Quality of Programs

- Develop and promote the use of evaluation criteria to advance quality in out-of-school programming.

Goal 4: Raise Public Awareness

- Partner with key stakeholders to develop and implement a public awareness campaign around out-of-school programming in Toronto.

Goal 5: Support Research and Knowledge Exchange

- Create opportunities for continued research and information sharing related to middle childhood and out-of-school time programs.

The Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy: Implementation Plan, *A Time for Action* (Appendix A) identifies the action needed to advance these goals.

COMMENTS

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan, *A Time for Action*, outlines the initial steps needed to progress toward a comprehensive system of out-of-school time programs in Toronto that will result in increased access and improved quality for families, and coordinated planning and decision making, and improved sustainability for service providers and families. It is meant as a starting point with gains made through the intense and sustained efforts of all stakeholders. Success will depend on leadership capability, commitment from major stakeholders, public support and communication among stakeholders.

Implementation is well underway with a number of activities already in progress. The Middle Childhood Strategy has been identified as a priority by the Toronto Child and Family Network. The Network is an integrated planning model that supports the development of a comprehensive system of services for families and children from birth to 12 years in Toronto. It provides the ideal structure to garner leadership, support and stakeholder buy-in for the implementation plan. The Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Workgroup has been created with representation from a broad range of stakeholders to carry out specific activities, monitor progress, and identify next steps. In addition, Children's Services has engaged a 2013-2014 Toronto Urban Fellow, who will provide intensive support in implementing the plan.

Implementation Priorities

The implementation plan for the Middle Childhood Strategy is an action plan for the next 18 months (June 2013 until November 2014). It breaks down the major goals and action items, and includes a timeline for each action.

The implementation plan focuses on the following areas:

Communication strategy to promote:

- a clear understanding of the issues facing Toronto
- shared goals for system building

Environmental Scan to understand:

- current legislative and regulatory requirements across the existing system
- current funders of middle childhood programs, with their eligibility criteria, priorities, and reporting requirements

Shared Outcomes to develop:

- common language and understanding of the goals for all of Toronto's children
- indicators to monitor the well-being of Toronto's children (birth to 12 years)

Information system to ensure:

- families can find the programs available in their neighbourhood on the before-and after-school program locator
- data is managed in order to identify service gaps
- planning and investment in programs is coordinated

Quality standards to provide:

- widespread understanding in what quality means in programs
- a common measure of program quality across all providers

Partnership building among funders and decision makers to:

- align funding and regulatory processes

Funding

Funding is a crucial enabler in the development of a high quality and affordable system of out-of-school time programs and will require significant attention. Fragmentation of funding is a major constraint in providing a more co-ordinated system. Knowledge of key intergovernmental involvement in the funding, planning and delivery of out-of-school time programs reaches across Federal agencies, at least three Provincial Ministry's and four City of Toronto Divisions. Initial efforts will concentrate on understanding and identifying how the current system is funded and identifying opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance financial sustainability. To this end, the development and implementation of the Middle Childhood Strategy is particularly timely in light of significant changes occurring in education at the provincial level, particularly around the child care funding system and legislation (the Days Nurseries Act).

In December 2012, the Ontario Government presented its new child care funding framework and formula for municipalities. The revised funding framework will provide greater flexibility for municipalities to allocate funding based on local needs. While there

is no new funding to expand services, it provides the City of Toronto with an opportunity to stabilize the child care system and to look at new more effective models for children aged six to 12 and that build on existing successes, such as ARC.

A report will be presented to Community Development and Recreation Committees at its June 26, 2013 meeting outlining the timing, process, principles and evaluation criteria for development of a Toronto based funding model for child care. Funding model development will align with the direction of the Middle Childhood Strategy.

Conclusion

The Middle childhood Strategy seeks to achieve the overarching goal of improving the overall well-being of Toronto's 6 to 12 year olds by focusing on out-of-school time programming. The outcome of implementing the attached plan will move Toronto closer to the creation of a citywide system of high quality out-of-school time programs that are affordable and accessible to Toronto's families.

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SIGNATURE

(original signed)

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan,
A Time for Action (2013)