

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy: Implementation Plan

A Time for Action

April 2013





Table of Contents

Purpose of Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan...	1
Background	2
Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy Description	3
Toronto Middle Childhood Goals	4
Implementation Plan	5
Stakeholders	6
Conclusion	7
Appendix A – Implementation Strategy Action Plan	8

Purpose of Middle Childhood Strategy Implementation Plan

This implementation plan has been developed to support the Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy (2012). Specific tasks and actions have been outlined for each strategic goal. A lead has been assigned to each task and an outcome and time line identified.

This implementation plan will be amended and updated as new tasks are introduced and as initiatives are implemented.

The Toronto Child and Family Network will incorporate into their work plans the priority requirements of the Middle Childhood Strategy on an annual basis.

The Middle Childhood Strategy (2012) and An Opportunity for Every Child: Realizing the Potential of After- School Programming for Children ages 6 – 12 in Toronto can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.toronto.ca/children/middlechildhood.htm>

Background

The City of Toronto has been considering and reporting on the after-school¹ needs of children aged 6 to 12 years for the last decade. The time for action is *now*. In October 2012, Toronto City Council approved the [Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy](#) and called for the development of an implementation plan to ensure the strategy is put into action.

Although the strategy focuses on families having access to a system of high quality programs for children 6 to 12 years old outside of school hours, it must be understood in the broader context of how it can contribute to advances in social and emotional well-being, and improved learning and health outcomes for children in this age group.²

Increasingly, research is demonstrating how quality out-of-school-time programs can have a positive impact on the developmental needs of children age 6 to 12 years. It is important to recognize the complexity and interconnection of services for children aged 6-12, and their alignment with other policy priorities such as health, nutrition and safety.

The strategy was created through the collaborative efforts of a dynamic workgroup with representation from a wide range of community networks and organizations including, CITYKIDS Network, District Child Care Advisory Committees, George Brown College, Toronto Middle Childhood Matters Coalition, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Toronto Community Housing, and Toronto Coalition for Better Childcare as well as different City divisions and agencies: Children's Services, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library and Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

The City of Toronto commissioned a report titled, [*An Opportunity for Every Child: Realizing the Potential of After-School Programming for Children Ages 6-12 in Toronto*](#), which inform the development of the Middle Childhood Strategy.

¹ After-school, also referred to as out-of-school -time programs in the context of the Strategy mean programs offered during the morning before school begins, in the afternoon when school is dismissed, school holidays and professional activity days.

² Harvard Family Research Project. After School Programs in the 21st Century. February 2008

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy

Description



When it comes to the needs of children ages 6 to 12, the data gathered from the research report *An Opportunity for Every Child: Realizing the Potential of After-School Programming for Children Ages 6-12 in Toronto*, demonstrates that parents want after-school programming and feel that it has many benefits for their children. However, parents are struggling with the accessibility of after-school programs in Toronto.

The Middle Childhood Strategy is intended to address the issues raised not only by parents but also by after-school personnel and policy experts.

The Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy presents goals to guide the development of a system of out-of-school-time programs for children aged 6 to 12 years.

Currently, after school programs occur in a variety of settings and are offered by a wide range of service providers, from licensed child care operators to faith based organizations, with little coordination or consistency across programs. This environment makes it difficult for many Toronto families to access quality middle childhood programs that meet their family needs.

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 actions that address various barriers to access, such as affordability, inclusive programming content, integrated models of service delivery and planning tools that address service gaps and inequities.

Toronto Middle Childhood 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

Implementation Plan

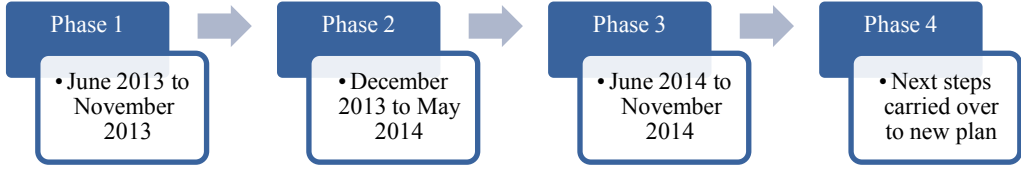
The Middle Childhood Strategy Workgroup has worked diligently to develop a strategy for Toronto. Since the workgroup's inception, much has changed in the landscape of services for children and families in Ontario. To respond to these changes Toronto Children's Services was prompted to lead a strategic review of how the various service systems interact with each other to create a more holistic response to issues facing children and families. The review resulted in the development of the Toronto Child and Family Network, an integrated planning model that supports a comprehensive system of services for new and expectant parents, children (birth to 12 years), and families in Toronto.

The model is made up of a Steering Committee that convenes a broad range of leaders from various governments, agencies and organizations, creating an opportunity to align provincial and municipal policies and community planning and programs. It also includes four planning tables that represent the service components of the child and family system and two population specific tables that intersect with the Steering Committee:

- Health
- Early Learning and Care
- Early Identification and Intervention
- Family Support
- Aboriginal Advisory
- French Language Advisory

The Steering Committee has adopted the Middle Childhood Strategy as one of its priorities and will be instrumental in providing high-level leadership and support. The Middle Childhood Strategy Workgroup will lead the implementation 'on the ground'. The workgroup will identify specific tasks within the Strategy, and will engage the appropriate planning committees responsible for each task to assist in its implementation.

The implementation plan for the Middle Childhood Strategy launches actions for the next 18 months. It will be amended and updated as new tasks are introduced.



Stakeholders

The City, local school boards, community agencies, academic institutions and provincial governments all have a vested interest in this important age group. The chart below identifies key stakeholders who will be engaged through the implementation process. The Strategy's success will take the collective efforts of all stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Role	Level of Participation
Children aged 6 - 12 years and families	Consumer	Consumer
Canadian Active After School Partnership (CAASP)	National Advisory	Decision maker
Community colleges - Child and Youth Workers Program; Early Childhood Education	Program support	Partner
Middle Childhood Matters Coalition	Networking and training	Partner
Parks Recreation Ontario (PRO)	Policy; quality assurance; education and training; capacity building	Advisors
School boards	Leaders, Policy	Decision maker
Toronto Child and Family Network	Leaders	Decision maker / partner
Key funders		
City of Toronto - community grants	Funder	Decision maker
Ministry of Education	Policy Direction	Decision maker
Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport - Ontario After School Initiative	Funder	Decision maker
Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)	National Funder	Decision maker
Royal Bank of Canada After School Grants	Funder	Decision maker
United Way of Toronto	Funder	Decision maker
Direct delivery		
Boys and Girls Clubs	Program delivery	Partner
Community based organizations	Program delivery	Partner
Faith Based	Program delivery	Partner
Licensed School Age Child Care	Program delivery	Partner
Parks Forestry & Recreation	Program delivery	Partner
School Boards	Program delivery	Partner
Toronto Public Library	Program delivery	Partner
YMCA/YWCA	Program delivery	Partner

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. Advancing this strategy provides the opportunity to affect thousands of children and build stronger communities.



Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy
Implementation Plan

**Goal 1:
Develop a Comprehensive and Integrated System of Services for Children Aged six to 12**

Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
phase 1	1.1	<p>Share and support a common understanding of out-of-school-time programming among key stakeholders in Toronto, including funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of Strategy • Distribution of Research 	Early Learning & Care Committee supported by Implementation workgroup	Strategy and research will be recognized with government, funders, families, and service providers	<p>Working with Strategic Corporate Communications, develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy to promote a shared understanding of the relevant issues in Toronto with all stakeholders</p> <p>Strategy can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On going distribution plan of relevant materials • Develop and distribute key messages on benefits of quality programs <p>Create of graphics and other communication tools to share findings from strategy and research with diverse communities across Toronto</p> <p>Capitalize on opportunities to present the research</p>
phase 1	1.2	<p>Support a network of community based programming for children ages 6 to 12 that is achieved through the creation of sustainable accessible and quality out-of-school-time system by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining legislative, accreditation and regulatory processes for program providers 	Early Learning & Care Committee supported by Implementation workgroup	An articulated vision for what a quality out-of-school time system looks like in Toronto	<p>Complete an environmental scan to identify the current legislative and regulatory requirements associated with out-of-school time programs in Toronto</p> <p>Identify opportunities for alignment</p> <p>Through consultation, develop recommendations for changes required in the DNA to meet needs of School Age Children that align with the shared vision for a Toronto system</p> <p>Submit recommended DNA changes to the Provincial Government as a shared Toronto vision</p>
phase 1 -3		<p>Support a network of community based programming for children ages 6 to 12 that is achieved through the creation of sustainability of an accessible and quality out-of-school-time system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination of funding priorities by all funders • shared funder eligibility and outcome requirements 	Toronto Child and Family Network	Funders symposium	<p>Align with the work associated with the Toronto child care funding formula in order to plan and develop alternate funding strategies for children 6 to 12 years</p> <p>Identify existing financial resources for out-of-school time programming, including eligibility criteria, priorities, distribution patterns, and reporting requirements</p> <p>Coordinate a funder networking meeting to share findings and identify solutions</p>

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy
Implementation Plan

**Goal 1:
Develop a Comprehensive and Integrated System of Services for Children Aged six to 12**

Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
phase 3	1.3	Establish quality assurance standards and indicators of quality for all out-of-school-time providers, including the development of tools and standards to measure program quality that consider both developmental differences and the local context in consultation with key stakeholders and based on evidence informed best practices	Early Learning & Care Committee supported by Quality Design workgroup	Development of Quality Standard model	<p>Identify quality assurance standards currently followed by the range of programs offered</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to share quality standards with program providers, funders, and parents</p> <p>Use quality standards across the system as a mechanism to facilitate improvement and build provider capacity</p> <p>Develop a quality model that takes into account the developmental differences within the age range of school age children</p> <p>Share quality standards with funders and identify how to leverage funding with program quality</p>
phase 2	1.4	Work with the Child and Family Network to develop common outcomes, key indicators, benchmarks and measurement tools for children 6 to 12 years old	Toronto Child & Family Network supported by Outcome workgroup	Monitoring and reporting of well-being of Toronto's Children	<p>Ensure that appropriate representation from stakeholders is included in the indicators workgroup (i.e. School Boards)</p> <p>Identify partnership opportunities with school boards to identify where a targeted approach can be used to improve outcomes for school age children through involvement in out-of-school time programs</p>
phase 1-3	1.5	Build partnerships and collaboration between the multiple stakeholders that support and provide out-of-school-time programs to create a system that offers seamless transitions for children	Toronto Child & Family Network Steering Committee	Stakeholders are engaged in system building efforts	<p>Identify opportunities for collaboration through the Toronto Child and Family Network structure that focus on Middle Childhood</p> <p>As key stakeholders identify how School Boards can be engaged as supporters and partners in out-of school time programming</p> <p>Align efforts with existing networks and coalitions (i.e.: Space Coalition, Middle Childhood Matters Coalition)</p>

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy
Implementation Plan

Goal 2: Improve Local Service Coordination and Planning					
Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
phase 1	2.1	Engage in local planning tables with community-based services planning for ages 6 to 12 that engage families in program planning and delivery	Toronto Child & Family Network	Local Planning tables include planning for 6 to 12 year olds	Local planning tables are part of the Toronto Child and Family Network structure. Establish ad hoc workgroup of the network to explore the delivery of integrated services at the local level
phase 1	2.2	Develop a database to map Toronto's out-of-school-time programs	Children's Services	Information system established that includes data of out-of-school time programs	Develop Information Systems for decision making by collecting and mapping information about providers and their programs. Expand the online program locator for families Determine criteria needed to be included in the locator
phase 1-3	2.3	Use local findings from mapping and local planning table to identify service gaps and inequities in program distribution to inform service coordination and funding priorities	Children's Services	Data will be available to identify gaps	Use the data collected from the locator to determine service gaps and underserved neighbourhoods and populations Determine appropriate mechanisms to fill gaps Develop a plan to ensure that newly created programs for 4 and 5 year olds have corresponding programs for 6 to 12 year olds
phase 3	2.4	Explore new models of service delivery for children ages 6 to 12 that enable the integration of staffing, resources, administration and facilities in order to improve quality, increase access and generate resource efficiencies	City Divisions & Agencies	Documentation of existing models Plot new models	Review information and data on the current models of delivery Document new models being explored through City Divisions (PF&R; Children's Services; TPL) and community organizations Identify and align with best practice work already in progress
phase 1-3	2.5	Formalize strategies for community-school collaborations that are consistent with the best interests of families and communities - particularly around shared use of space, equipment, staffing and other resources	Toronto Child & Family Network	School Boards engaged in Implementation Plan	In partnership with School Boards encourage cooperation in ensuring families have access to out-of-school time programs Build support and partnership with the School boards by reaching out to superintendents, principals and teachers to participate in the implementation plan Identify best practices of coordination between school-day and after-school activities Explore development of formal agreements between school systems and other partners to ensure alignment with the expansion of school age programs within schools

Goal 3: Advance Quality of Programs					
Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
phase 3	3.1	Develop evaluation criteria to assess the quality of programs for the purposes of accountability and program improvement	Early Learning & Care Committee supported by Quality Design Workgroup	Development of a Quality standard model	<p>Stages of the planning process</p> <p>1. PLAN & ENGAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a workgroup with expertise in quality assurance and represent the wide range of stakeholders • Complete environmental scan to determine available tools and what organizations are currently using • Engage stakeholders • Define quality by reaching a consensus definition • Clarify how the tool will be used across all programs, these may differ • Consider information needs • Identify potential resources <p>2. DESIGN & BUILD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the model possibly adopting or building on current tools • Develop system supports for the model, including training and mentoring • Recruit pilot sites to test the model <p>3. ADJUST & SUSTAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine the model and system supports • Build capacity across the sector • Engage new sites and sectors • Evaluate
next steps	3.2	Promote the use of the quality standards by offering ongoing training and resources to staff	Quality Design Workgroup	Professional development provided that aligns with quality standards model	Use quality model to inform ongoing staff training and development
next steps	3.3	Use evaluation criteria to inform funding needs	Early Learning & Care Committee		Promote the quality tool with all funders Identify alignment of various funders
phase 1-3	3.4	Support new out-of-school-time programs using elements of high-quality and best practices to accommodate the diverse needs of children (6-12) as well as their families and communities	Early Learning & Care Committee	Development of an information hub	Encourage new programs to link with coalition of service providers Promote knowledge exchange between existing and new service providers through a repository best practices on children's services website
phase 3	3.5	Advance screening tools for children ages 6-12 and ensure that staff are trained and qualified to support children with different developmental needs	Early ID & Intervention	Existing screening tools identified	Work with the Child and Family networks Early Identification and Intervention planning committee to explore existing developmental tools available for children in middle childhood

Toronto Middle Childhood Strategy
Implementation Plan

Goal 4: Raise Public Awareness					
Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
phase 2	4.1	Partner with key stakeholders to develop and implement a public awareness campaign around out-of-school-time programming in Toronto	Children's Services	Out-of-school time programming for children ages six to 12 years on the public agenda	Partner with stakeholder groups on an annual public awareness campaign Develop material to share the results of the parent survey from the Toronto's research findings; An Opportunity for Every Child
Goal 5: Support Research and Knowledge Exchange					
Timeline	Action #	Action	Lead Responsibility	Progress Measure	Activity
ongoing	5.1	Create an information-sharing hub in partnership with MCM-T for providers to improve access to out-of-school time program resources, tools, and knowledge exchange opportunities	Children's Services	Information hub will share research and key documents supporting Toronto's Middle Childhood Strategy linking to local, provincial and national initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development of an information hub accessed by both service providers and parents. http://www.toronto.ca/children/middlechildhood.htm Include all relevant information to support service providers in access funding and improve quality
ongoing	5.2	Seek out opportunities to continue research on children in middle childhood	Toronto Child & Family Network		<p>Ensure linkages and partnership with research initiatives focused on children 6 to 12 years</p> <p>Focus on healthy impact of out-of-school time programming</p>