



ECEBC's View on Full School Day Kindergarten

The Early Childhood Educators of BC has spent the past number of months discussing, listening and thinking about what full school day kindergarten means for us in this province. As we know you are, we are also paying close attention the Ministry of Education's development of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds, and the language in our government's throne speech of February 2010 intrigues us:

"New partnerships with the private sector and parents will enable the establishment of neighbourhood preschools for four-year-olds and three-year-olds within communities over the next five years.

They will provide families new voluntary options for public and private preschool across BC."

This is what we know:

- By the Fall of 2010, every school district in BC will have full school day kindergarten for approximately 50% of the children in the district. To date, a few districts have decided to wait until 2011 to implement it and will then offer the program to all children in the district at the same time.
- The Ministry of Education is responsible for early learning as well as education. Child care remains under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Full school day kindergarten does not include any before and after school care. Districts have been encouraged to consider implications to child care programs; however, schools are not mandated to have or develop child care programs.
- Some school districts are increasing rents and maintenance costs to child care programs on or in their schools. Some child care programs have received eviction notices as their space is required for other school district use.
- While some individual school districts are engaging with ECEs to discuss full school day kindergarten, the Ministry of Education has no formal structure for discussion in place.

This is what we don't know:

- The effect full school day kindergarten will have on enrollment in community-based child care programs.
- In stating that "New partnerships with the private sector and parents will enable the establishment of neighbourhood preschools for four-year-olds and three-year-olds within communities", what does the government mean and envision? To date, neither the Ministry of Education nor any other government department has released any information on this.

What will be the role of early childhood educators in the new system? While the Expanding Early Learning in BC discussion paper indicated a need for an additional 4000 ECE's, there has been no further discussion or information from the Ministry of Education regarding our role. For more information including questions and answers, Parent Pamphlet and the full day kindergarten program guide, see the Ministry of Education link at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/.

ECEBC, in partnership with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, has received funding for a project entitled "Moving to a System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC." Through this project, we are developing a vision for an integrated system of care and learning that meets the developmental needs of all children and their families and respects and values the expertise of ECEs. The link on our website is: http://www.ecebc.ca/news/integrated_project.html.

An Advisory Committee for this project has been formed and has met twice. Representatives from ECEBC are Vi-Anne Zirnhelt and Denise Marshall from the ECEBC Board, Charlene Grey from the Comox-Courtenay Branch, and ECEBC's Executive Director. As well, literature and environmental scans have been drafted and are in the final stages of completion.

At this point ECEBC is still working to formulate and articulate a clear picture of what a quality early care and learning system for BC should look like. That is why we have not issued a response. However, we are actively engaged in the discussion and urge you to become active as well. The effects of the move to full school day kindergarten, as well as preschool partnerships for three and four-year-olds have potential for far reaching consequences to early childhood educators and the programs in which we work. Change is on the horizon and all of us need to be prepared for discussion and for finding solutions. Please continue to monitor our website for information. Please also see our ECEBC's response to the Ministry of Education Early Learning Agency Consultation in July, 2008. You will find this on our website http://www.ecebc.ca/resources/pdf/ecebc_ecla_response.pdf.

The Canadian Child Care Federation has issued "Reflections on Shaping an Integrated System of Early Learning and Child Care and Education for Children in Canada." You can find it at http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/home_en.html