



RICHMOND CHILDREN FIRST Response to EXPANDING EARLY LEARNING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

On Tuesday, August 12th, 22 individuals (see attached) representing the early learning sector attended a community dialogue hosted and facilitated by Richmond Children First. Participants represented 14 different organizations.

While an extension of the deadline was appreciated, there was concern expressed that the short time frame allowed for the consultation limited the opportunity for wider consultation.

Richmond Children First

Active since 2004, Richmond Children First is a community partnership that brings people together to build a supportive, responsive community for young children and their families by connecting research, people, ideas and resources.

Introduction

The consultation paper presented a number of ideas that are supported by the Richmond consultation. We know through brain research that access to early learning opportunities is essential to the future well-being of children and that it is important to invest in the early years. The child care community has been using this same research to develop quality environments and opportunities for young children for many years.

However there were numerous points in the consultation paper that elicited concern and questions. Participants raised questions about government's motivation and lack of transparency. Concern and fear were also expressed about how this might impact the valuable contribution of current child care professionals to early learning and care.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON FULL SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN FOR FIVE-YEAR-OLDS?

Overall, participants support full school day kindergarten for 5 year olds with the following suggestions:

- Full-day kindergarten should be free of charge, accessible to all families and optional
- Child care outside of school hours should be integrated through an early learning and care approach, preferably in one location, for full-day kindergarten for all ages
- Provide a play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum that meets the broad needs of this age group
- Work with other ministries to ensure that a stable infrastructure is available to support additional needs

WHAT ABOUT PARENT CHOICE FOR FULL SCHOOL DAY PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR FOUR-YEAR OLDS?

Most participants felt that as many 4-year olds have already participated in part or full day learning programs, a full-day pre-kindergarten for this age group is appropriate with the following considerations:

- Full-day kindergarten should be free of charge, accessible to all families and optional, including a half-day option, as some children will not be ready for a full-day program
- Build purpose-designed facilities or use existing centres that address developmental needs
- Include parents as 'knowledgeable partners'
- Maintain current child care licensing ratio and space requirements
- Address the needs of working families through an integrated learning and care approach
- Provide play-based, developmentally-appropriate programs including specialized programs
- Employ and adequately compensate qualified staff with expertise in early childhood education

WHAT ABOUT PARENT CHOICE FOR FULL SCHOOL DAY PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR THREE-YEAR-OLDS?

The majority of participants felt that full day pre-kindergarten programs would not be suitable for the majority of 3-year olds. The developmental needs of this age group are not only significantly different than many 4- and 5-year olds but also cover a wider range. Specific issues discussed by participants included:

- Importance of relationships - potential disruption of attachment to parents and primary caregivers
- Toileting needs, including toilet training, during this age
- Importance of providing adequate space for sleep/quiet time
- Facility requirements, toys, playgrounds, etc are all quite different for this age group

This option needs a lot of investigation and evidence-based research to ensure the needs of 3-year olds are addressed.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN EXPANDING EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA?

- Build on current quality early childhood curriculum rather than flowing down elementary school curriculum
- Develop an integrated program of early learning and out of school care to meet the needs of all young children and families
- Develop a thoughtful, long-term program with sufficient funding, qualified staffing and strong working partnerships with child care licensing, all levels of government and community-based organizations
- Be inclusive of children with extra support needs and provide adequately funded assessment and support services
- Train and employ adequately compensated qualified staff; wage parity for early childhood educators with primary teachers would go a long way in addressing recruitment and retention

Submitted on behalf of Richmond Children First by:
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Participants: Richmond Consultation

Alblas, Alexis	Cambie Community Centre, Preschool Coordinator
Boisclair, Monique	Discovery Montessori School
Bourque, Sandra	Richmond School District (Board of Education Trustee)
Brownridge, Llaesa	Richmond Soc. for Community Living (Supported Child Development)
Cimini, Pia	Discovery Montessori School
DeVerheyen, June	St. Saviour's Preschool
Jones, Shannon	Tomorrow's Topkids Child Care Society
Jordan, Amie	Earth Child Montessori
Kaiser, June	Richmond School District (CUPE President)
McCaughey, Isabelle	Tomorrow's Topkids Child Care Society
McKenzie, Terra	Hamilton Child Care Services
McPhail, Linda	Richmond School District (Board of Education Trustee)
Pestonjir, Mahazarine	Early Foundations Montessori
Priel, Adina	Noah's Ark School
Sawczenko, Andrea	Tomorrow's Topkids Child Care Society
Schroeder, MaraLea	Richmond Soc. for Community Living (Supported Child Development)
Shirley, Linda	Richmond Child Care Development Advisory Committee
Thom, Marie	Richmond School District (Early Learning Coordinator)
Trouw, Ingrid	Richmond School District (Past President PAC)
Tsang, Grace	Richmond School District (Board of Education Trustee)
Wedhwania, Sushma	Creative Montessori
Wong, Alice	Richmond Chinese Parents Association