



Full-Day Kindergarten and Schoolage Program Updates

Date: November 15, 2016

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Children's Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to two Community Development and Recreation Committee requests. The first request is for an update on full-day kindergarten implementation. The second is for a report on provincial policy direction and regulations and City standards for school age children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. City Council request that the Province of Ontario provide additional child care fee subsidies to enable the ongoing expansion of before and after school kindergarten and schoolage programs and to address affordability barriers for families.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the approval of this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of September 20, 2016, Community Development and Recreation Committee requested the General Manager, Children's Services to "report to the November 29, 2016 Community Development and Recreation meeting with an update of the 2013 report, which includes number of schools, operators, number of subsidies, nutritional and other supports provided for all-day kindergarten, and other related matters related to After School/Extended Day programs."

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD14.15>

Community Development and Recreation Committee at its meeting of April 13, 2016, requested the General Manager, Children's Services and the General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation to report to a future meeting of the Community Development and Recreation Committee on emerging provincial policy directions and regulations related to before and after school programs and City of Toronto middle-year standards for school age children.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.4>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

As of September 2014, Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) has been implemented in every elementary school in Ontario. The free, universal program follows a play-based curriculum and is staffed by a team made up of a teacher and a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE). Since the program's implementation began, school boards have been mandated through the *Education Act* to survey parents on their need for before and after school programs for children attending FDK and to provide those programs where sufficient demand exists (defined as 20 positive responses and registrations). The before and after-school program occurs in shared space, meaning that children remain as a cohort throughout the day. Boards have the option of directly operating the program or contracting with a third party licensed child care provider to offer the program on their behalf. This is a change from the original provincial direction for school boards to directly operate the extended day portion for four and five year olds. This change occurred as a result of community feedback from child care operators and boards of education received during provincial consultations on proposed legislative changes. In Toronto, both English school boards have determined that they will not directly operate, instead contracting out the program to third party operators. Each French-language school board currently directly operates one program.

Over the course of implementation, parents moved their children from full time child care to the universal FDK program in schools. This resulted in savings to the child care fee subsidy system, which have been reinvested in additional subsidies for younger children. At the same time, this created vacancies in preschool child care spaces, putting some operators' viability at risk. Through work with partners, including school boards and operators, and with provincial investments, the child care system was stabilized through this period of change. Stabilization techniques are described in the Comments section of this report. While FDK is now in every elementary school, Children's Services continues to work with partners on a number of outstanding issues, including the use of shared space in schools for before and after school programs and establishing before and after school programs where they do not currently exist.

Recent *Education Act* and *Child Care and Early Years Act* regulatory changes created a new duty for school boards to also provide before and after school programs for children

in grades one to six where there is demand; allowed authorized recreation and skill-building programs to serve these children after school; and removed the survey process for establishing demand in favour of broader consultation and reaching a consensus with the service system manager (in Toronto, this is Children's Services). These changes will be in effect for the 2017-18 school year. Clarity has also been provided regarding which programs are considered to be child care and therefore require a child care licence. The enforcement of these rules, described in the Comments section, may impact a number of existing unlicensed programs and therefore increase the level of unmet need for before and after school programming.

COMMENTS

Full Day Kindergarten Updates

The implementation of FDK was a significant change for families, child care operators, school boards, and the City. A number of transitional supports were used to stabilize and transform the child care system through the five year period of change.

Central to these supports was a transitional grant program funded by the Province and administered by Children's Services. Grants were available to assist operators with the costs of transitioning their services to meet the needs of younger children. As part of this funding, between 2010 and 2016, the Province provided approximately \$7 million in minor capital funding for non-profit child care centres to retrofit spaces and playgrounds and to support start-up costs associated with serving younger children when four and five year olds moved to FDK and rooms became vacant. This money was used in child care centres outside of schools. (An additional \$18 million was provided separately to school boards under the Schools-First Child Care Capital Retrofit Policy to retrofit child care space in schools).

As a result of this transformation, infant licensed capacity has increased from 2,851 to 3,393 and toddler capacity from 7,402 to 9,801 between winter 2013 and November 2016.

Funding was also provided to operators for Business Transformation (to offset legal, lease termination, moving, business planning and information technology costs) and Stabilization (to offset the cost of vacancies associated with four and five year olds incrementally moving to FDK programs; and to provide a bagged lunch for children escorted to FDK programs). The Province provided close to \$5 million from 2012 to 2016 for these grants, and provided flexibility to use underspent amounts for child care fee subsidy.

Capital and business transformation grants were available to non-profit child care centres and home child care agencies with a service contract for fee subsidy. The stabilization grant was available to both non-profit and commercial centres. In Toronto, 254 grant were approved between 2011 and 2015, with approximately \$7 million allocated to date. Requests for the 2016 cycle, the last year that the Province is providing the grants, are currently being reviewed.

In 2013, Children's Services provided updates on the status of FDK implementation in Toronto. The table below updates key statistics from the 2012-13 school year.

Table 1: Key Full-Day Kindergarten Before and After School Statistics

	2012-13 school year	2016-17 school year	Change
# of schools with FDK	279	598	+ 319
# of FDK before/after school programs	88	318	+ 230
# of FDK before/after school spaces	2,359	10,601	+8,242
# of subsidies	5,664 (placed on November 2, 2012)	5,624 (placed on November 2, 2016)	-40
Fees (before and after)	\$29-32\$ per day	\$29-\$38 per day	+ \$6/day at the high range

Before and after school program fees are significantly less than full-day fees for preschool children, which generally range from \$39 to \$70 per day. A child care fee subsidy may be used in the before and after-school program. Currently, approximately 5,600 children with a fee subsidy are using the subsidy in a kindergarten program. This is approximately the same number of kindergarten children who had a fee subsidy in 2013, illustrating that while spaces are expanding, growth in fee subsidies has not kept up. Compared to FDK enrolment in Toronto of over 45,000 children, it is clear that there are insufficient fee subsidies available to support all the children who need before and after school care.

With respect to nutrition, in 2013, Children's Services reported that the lunch period for kindergarten children occurs during the regular school day, not in a before and after school program. The new regulations continue to require that boards assess demand and provide programs for only the before and after school portions of the day. Through

the five-year transition, Children's Services recognized that this was a major change for families. As a result, the stabilization grants included funding that allowed child care operators who escort to FDK programs to provide bagged lunches. In 2013, staff reported that eleven operators had accessed the grant since it became available in 2012. In 2015, 23 operators applied for and 21 received the bagged lunch grant. Results for the 2016 process are not yet available. This grant opportunity has now ended along with the other provincial grants.

Legislative and Regulatory Changes to before and after school programs for 6-12 year olds.

Recent provincial legislative, regulatory, and policy changes are transforming the delivery of programming for children in grades one to six. Amended regulations under the *Education Act* filed in May 2016 created a new duty for school boards to provide before and after school programs for these children where there is a demand for the 2017-18 school year. School boards are required to consult with the service system manager, parents, child care operators, and others in order to demonstrate demand for and viability of potential programs (for both FDK and schoolage before and after school programs). The parent survey that was mandated over the course of FDK implementation to assess demand for programs is no longer required. In order to not provide a program, school boards must reach consensus with the service system manager that the program is not needed. Without this consensus, the regulation provides that a program must be provided (with a small number of exceptions). Children's Services is engaged with school boards in developing a system-level approach to determining demand for and viability of potential new programs.

Children's Services and its partners had already been focused on expanding schoolage care prior to the release of the new regulations. Starting in 2014, Children's Services worked with TDSB and TCDSB to identify schools interested in and eligible for school age expansion. Targeted approaches were put in place to fill vacancies in existing programs and create new and expanded programs in order to meet the needs of FDK and schoolage children. Through these efforts, the system grew by 28 programs with 2,209 spaces. As part of this expansion, Toronto Children's Services partnered with Parks, Forestry and Recreation to offer 10 new After-School Recreation Care (ARC) programs starting September 2015.

As with programs for kindergarten children, the before and after school program for children in grades one to six may be directly operated by the school board, or operated by a third party. For the older age group, the third party program may be either licensed child care or an authorized recreation and skill building program. Authorized recreation programs may serve these children for the after-school period only, for up to three hours per day. As laid out in regulation, authorized recreation programs can be:

- Operated by a school board, First Nation, the Métis Nation of Ontario, or a municipality;
- Operated by the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club of Canada
- An Ontario After School Program funded by Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS);

- A member of a provincial multi-sports organization;
- Operated by an MTCS agency or attraction;
- Authorized by the local service system manager or First Nation provided that the program supports the health, safety, and well-being of children.

Provincial guidelines for service system managers that are considering whether or not to authorize programs in addition to those already permitted by regulation are expected by the end of 2016. Children's Services, in consultation with Parks, Forestry & Recreation and Social Development, Finance & Administration, is assessing whether or not it will be necessary to exercise this option given the diversity of programs already authorized.

Successes and Issues Related to Kindergarten and Schoolage Programs

Through the implementation period of Full-Day Kindergarten, a number of initiatives were pursued to stabilize the child care system. In addition to the grant program described above, these efforts included community meetings with operators and ongoing information sharing at District Child Care Advisory meetings. Children's Services District Consultants worked closely with child care operators, both individually and in groups at local network meetings, to provide information and advice as organizations were developing transition plans. To improve working relationships in shared space, Children's Services held joint training sessions with school boards that brought educator teams together to discuss and resolve issues. All of these efforts, and others by school boards, child care operators and others contributed to maintaining a high quality system over the implementation period. They have also developed relationships and approaches that will be useful as before and after school programs continue to expand.

At the same time, there are a number of issues that are still being resolved and will be considered as new schoolage program models are developed.

With respect to both kindergarten and school age programs, the lack of additional child care fee subsidies to support expansion of the licensed child care sector is an ongoing issue. As reported in the Licensed Child Care Demand and Affordability Study, considered by City Council in November 2016 (CD15.2), many families in Toronto cannot afford licensed child care programs. As a result, efforts that create additional programs and spaces without sufficient operating resources to address affordability risk spaces being unfilled.

In terms of operating new programs, a number of issues arise. It is not clear that there are enough child care operators willing to take on new or expanded programs. Some of these programs are becoming very large and as a result can be onerous to operate, especially for volunteer parent boards. School boards have indicated that there are significant challenges to directly operating these programs, including human resources issues and establishing the administrative structures that would be required to support the program.

The availability of quality space in schools remains an issue affecting before and after school programs for all age groups; as does sharing of space between staff teams during different parts of the day. Programming space affects program quality. Programming sometimes takes place in unsuitable space within the school. Ideally, the same high quality space used during the school day is available and in use before and after school. Recreation program providers have also raised the issue of consistent access to quality space in schools. It is crucial that as new programs are competing for the same space in schools, access to a variety of spaces is maintained. Children's Services' Assessment for Quality Improvement reveals that in many areas, FDK programs in shared space are less likely to successfully meet all the assessment requirements than preschool programs operating in exclusive space. This difference can result from classroom amenities being required for different purposes at different times of the day, and professional differences in how space and resources should be accessed and used. This is a major barrier to the success of a high quality, seamless experience for children in school.

Despite this general trend, there are many examples where sharing space and resources is working well. It is clear from those examples that training and ongoing communication between all stakeholders is necessary for space to be shared successfully. As service system manager, Children's Services is committed to learning more about the factors that create this success and continuing to work with partners to raise expectations for how space and resources are used in support of program quality. School boards and Children's Services share the same goal of providing high quality enriched learning environments that foster positive child outcomes. As such, work continues to further this goal through joint professional learning opportunities.

Finding well-qualified staff to work split shifts in part-time before and after programs is a key challenge for both licensed child care and recreation program providers and a significant impediment to program expansion. Currently, about 45 per cent (30,000 spaces) of the licensed child care capacity in Toronto is before and after school for the majority of the year. The number of staff needed for these roles will increase as before and after school programs are expanded.

All of these issues are being worked on by Children's Services, school boards, child care operators, and others. Accordingly, at its meeting of October 26, 2016, the Toronto District School Board resolved that the Director of Education review the implementation of provincial regulations pertaining to extended day and full-day kindergarten lunch time supervision and before and after school programs in the board. The review is to be completed by the end of the current academic year and will provide recommendations to the City of Toronto, the School Board and the Province. Children's Services anticipates contributing to review and will consider how the results can be incorporated into future planning and implementation.

Issues affecting planning for schoolage programs

With respect to the new schoolage regulations, there is a significant amount of planning work to be completed with school boards in order to meet requirements for the 2017-18 school year. The new requirement to determine the need for programs in every school

means assessing close to 600 elementary schools across four school boards in Toronto. While work is ongoing with school board partners to understand and prepare, provincial policies and guidelines for school boards are still in draft form, which has held back a detailed planning process. Children's Services and the school boards have expressed to the Province that a phased approach to the implementation of the new requirements would result in better long-term planning. Children's Services has established a working group with the English-language school boards to work on a shared approach to determining demand and establishing programs. This process is exploring how to leverage programs that already exist in schools to create a continuum of care from kindergarten through grade six, where demand exists. A separate process will take place with the French-language boards.

Provincial guidelines for municipalities related to authorizing recreation programs are not expected until the end of 2016. Based on a draft version of the guidelines, Children's Services anticipates that authorized recreation and skill-building programs that are acting as a third party operator for the school board will have to meet a number of requirements. These include requirements for staff qualifications, provision of snacks, and first aid and CPR training, among others, that exceed levels currently required of these programs. As a result, entering into a third party agreement with the school board may result in budget impacts and create obstacles for Parks, Forestry and Recreation, as well as other program providers, to deliver after-school programming. There are currently 51 After-school Recreation Care sites serving 1605 children (35 of these sites serving close to 1110 children are currently located in schools). 21 non-ARC before and after school programs with 629 participants are also currently operating, two of which are located in schools. Some programs may already meet the draft requirements, especially those funded by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport, whose requirements mirror those in the draft guidelines. Programs operating outside of a third party relationship with the school board are not obligated to meet these same requirements and would not be impacted. Further assessments of programs affected will be completed once the final guidelines are available.

Responsibility for monitoring the third party contracts would fall to school boards. It is unknown whether school boards have sufficient resources to take on this new responsibility. If they do not, the number of third party contracts between school boards and authorized recreation and skill-building programs for children in grades one to six may be limited.

Also concerning are changes affecting recreation programming. Many longstanding community-based programs are likely to be displaced if they will require a child care license and cannot comply with all requirements. Under the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, programs where the primary purpose is to support skill-based sports and recreation are not considered child care and do not require a child care license. These are programs that tend to be episodic, and of short duration and frequency. However, where the primary purpose is to provide care, the program must operate as either a licensed child care centre, an unlicensed child care provider, or an authorized recreation and skill building program. New provincial rules identify the criteria by which a program is considered child care. Factors like scheduling, ages served, the facility and equipment, whether transportation is provided, and the content of the program are used to determine the primary purpose of a program. As the province applies these rules

some existing unlicensed programs may be deemed to be providing care as a primary purpose. Existing programs may cease to operate or reduce operating hours instead of meeting all the requirements of a licensed child care operator. As a result, the need for programming may increase. Children's Services and school boards have raised with the Province the prospect of programs closing and children being displaced.

The General Manager, Parks Forestry and Recreation has reviewed and concurs with this section of the report.

Schoolage Standards and other supports

In 2015, Toronto Children's Services, in partnership with Braeburn Neighbourhood Place and Boys and Girls Clubs, and researchers from the University of Western Ontario, researched and developed [quality standards](#) for out-of-school-time programs serving children between the ages of 6 to 12. The researchers used a concept mapping approach in which participants generate a broad range of ideas on a topic, and then a smaller group of participants organize these ideas. After the data is organized, two statistical procedures are used to render the data visually. In this exercise, children, parents, program staff and supervisors involved in after-school programs were asked to identify the most important characteristics of high-quality after-school programs. The research uncovered strong agreement regarding the most important factors in programming for children in middle childhood.

The research led to the development of 10 standards:

- Sound Leadership & Staffing Practices
- Quality Interactions & Relationships
- Provides a Positive Atmosphere
- Safe & Healthy
- Fosters Well-Being & Healthy Self-Beliefs
- Quality Programming
- Intentional Pedagogical Approaches
- Culturally Responsive & Inclusive
- Integrated Community Partnerships
- Evaluates Effectiveness

After-school program professionals are encouraged to use the standards and accompanying support guide to reflect on areas of strength and areas for improvement. The standards have also been embedded into the Assessment for Quality Improvement.

Children's Services has also developed a before and after school locator to track programs reported to Children's Services by community agencies. The locator includes programs operating four or five days a week, before school starts in the morning and/or after school ends in the afternoon. This provides a resource for families and planning information to the City and its partners.

These tools, along with working relationships with school boards that include offering ongoing joint training opportunities, will greatly assist with the implementation of the new regulations.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges experienced during the implementation of FDK and as expanded programs for schoolage children are implemented, the opportunity to expand the number of programs for children in schools is needed. With approximately half of elementary schools hosting an FDK before and after school program, some parts of the City are not well-served by the program. A small number of sites have FDK programs with no corresponding schoolage program, which deprives families of access to a continuum of care as their children age. The new regulations offer a chance to address some of these gaps.

Children's Services will continue to contribute to planning and implementation efforts that facilitate the expansion of schoolage programs. Still, more certain information and resources are needed from the Province to successfully expand before and after school care on the scale envisioned. The impacts of new program requirements and the implementation timeline also warrant further discussion so that all partners can contribute to building a stable system of services for children in school.

CONTACT

Karen Gray, Director
Service System Planning and Policy Development
Toronto Children's Services
416-397-1465
karen.gray@toronto.ca

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Elaine Baxter-Trahair
General Manager, Children's Services