

Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education

FROM: Kevin Costante
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Education

DATE: October 27, 2009

SUBJECT: Implementation of Early Learning for four- and five-year-olds

I know that many of you have been waiting to hear about the government's plans for early learning. I am pleased to share with you now the details of an exciting new initiative focused on full day early learning for our youngest learners. Premier Dalton McGuinty announced today that the government will proceed with its commitment to invest \$200 million in 2010-11 and \$300 million in 2011-12 for the phased-in implementation of the Early Learning Program (ELP) for four- and five-year-olds. The ELP will provide a smoother transition to Grade 1, and help children develop the social and academic skills necessary to succeed in school and in life.

The Early Learning Program will be offered in selected schools in Year One, the 2010-11 school year. It is anticipated that approximately 35,000 spaces for four- and five-year-olds will be available during the 2010-11 school year. The goal is to have early learning fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16

To provide support to Boards and leadership in the ELP, I am pleased to welcome Jim Grieve as the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Early Learning Division. Jim's team will play a leadership role on the Early Learning file with a presence both at the Ministry of Education and in the field. They will work closely with you as you plan for and implement the ELP.

The package of materials you are receiving today will orient you to the new ELP. Included under this cover are:

- Memorandum 2009: B12
- Early Learning – Phase One School Selection planning template

These documents provide you with a detailed review of key program features, funding allocations and processes related to the ELP and the selection of the first sites for Fall 2010. The

following is a general overview of those items, highlighting a few additional matters for your attention.

Program Model

The Early Learning Program will include a full school day of learning for four- and five-year-olds and a fee-based extended day for those same children. A blended staffing model comprised of one teacher and one Early Childhood Educator (ECE), working side by side, will deliver the program during the school day with an average class size of 26 students. The before- and after-school programs will be led by ECE staff, and funded by parent fees set on a full cost-recovery basis. Some subsidies will be available for low-income families. School attendance is only compulsory for children aged six and older; kindergarten programs continue to be optional. In addition, parents may choose to enrol their children in the extended day programs.

Selection of Early Learning Schools

Boards will be asked to submit a list of proposed schools for September 2010 implementation after consultation with coterminous boards, local Best Start networks, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, and District Social Services Administration Boards. Details regarding the process and ministry support to assist boards in developing a list of Early Learning Schools for Year One implementation are outlined in the attached B memo.

Communication

It is recommended that boards begin to develop a communications plan for mid January 2010 to inform parents, the child care sector and the broader community of their plans for implementation of Year One. Details should include the location of selected schools, Early Learning Program details, the registration process and timelines, and the board contact person with whom parents and community members can speak to obtain further information. The ministry will provide materials that school boards and schools can customize and use to promote this important new initiative to their communities. We are providing some preliminary information to the communications contacts at your boards today.

Registration

Once the list of ELP schools has been approved by the ministry in mid-January, boards can begin student registration for selected ELP sites for September 2010. You may register students in the Early Learning Program along with the regular Kindergarten registration process in your board.

Curriculum Development

The ministry intends to review the Kindergarten Program (2006) and Early Learning for Every Child Today (2006) and release in draft an updated document for use in ELP schools in spring 2010. The development of the document will involve consultation with stakeholders including supervisory officers, program staff, principals, teachers, early childhood educators and parents.

Professional Development

To support implementation, professional learning opportunities and networks will be organized for board teams, including supervisory officers, teachers, early childhood educators and principals. Details will be provided at a later date.

Early Learning Implementation Branch - Regional Office Early Learning Education Officers Boards are encouraged to begin the selection of an Early Learning Leader as soon as possible. Ministry Regional Office Early Learning Education Officers are available to assist you and will be preparing a list of board and ministry contacts and organizing regional meetings to support Year One implementation. They will be in contact with you in the near future.

This is an exciting time in our sector in Ontario and your partnership in implementing this new initiative is essential. While we have a great deal of work ahead, I note that our sector has risen to the challenge of implementing very significant changes in recent years such as the Primary Class Size initiative and the launch of Best Start. I know we can continue this success by working together, and by strengthening relationships with other partners such as Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards. These relationships will help us plan effectively and use resources wisely.

We look forward to working with you in implementing this important initiative.

Kevin Costante

Enclosed: B Memo
Early Learning – Phase One School Selection planning template

CC: Judith Wright, Deputy Minister of Children and Youth Services