

**SURREY MAKE CHILDREN FIRST
RESPONSE TO EARLY LEARNING AGENCY CONSULTATION
ADVISORY GROUP TO RESPOND TO EARLY LEARNING AGENCY CONSULTATION
MEETING NOTES - JULY 10, 2008**

ATTENDANCE:

Pat Horsted, Surrey Board of Education

Karen Norman, Options

Jane Scott, Peace Arch Community Services

Laura Soon, MCFD

Penny Bradley, Crescent Beach Community Services

Susan Papadionissiou, Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care

Surrey Make Children First Response to the Consultation Paper "Expanding Early learning in British Columbia for Children Aged 3 – 5" issued by the BC Early Childhood Learning Agency.

1. What are your thoughts on full school day kindergarten for five year olds?

If all day kindergarten is implemented then we must ensure that:

- Programs and methodologies and practices acknowledge and accommodate the differential developmental needs of all children
- All children must benefit equally (including special needs children, schedules of working families, and children with stay at home caregivers etc.)
- Adult– child ratio needs to be adjusted for this age group in line with research and Best Practices for this age group. The 1 – 15 adult to child ratio needs to include an Adult and Teacher , not only one Teacher who works with 15 five year olds all day
- Currently in Surrey the K teachers receive ECE professional development and training. This practice needs to be supported, funded and strengthened for all K teachers

2. What about parent choice for full-school-day pre kindergarten for four year olds?

- The term "pre kindergarten" should be changed to "early childhood development" programs in order to convey that the experiences that would most benefit four year olds should be based on the concepts and practices of early childhood development. The association to "kindergarten" is misleading to parents and the public, especially as programs would be operating from a school site.
- Early childhood development programs within schools should allow for a range of parental involvement, including parental choice of enrollment in programs close to home or to work
- Early childhood development programs should be operated by staff who are trained with early childhood education credentials

3. What about parent choice for full-school-day pre-kindergarten programs for three year olds?

- We don't believe that the school setting is an appropriate environment for all day activities for three year olds.

- The school site is appropriate for short term drop in type programs, such as the Strong Start programs currently operating in schools
- The broad range of Early Childhood Development programs (community based, public sector/not for profit sector) need to be delivered so that all children benefit equally

4. What do you think are the most important factors to consider in expanding early learning programs in British Columbia?

- Parent and public education about the value and importance of early childhood experiences and education needs to be part of a system wide approach to supporting children under six
- Care and education are not separate concepts. Quality programs for young children provide both. Learning occurs through play based, developmentally appropriate experiences. Any programs provided at a school site need to be based on these principles of early childhood development
- All Kindergarten and pre-K teachers should obtain early childhood education training
- It is vitally important that young children experience continuity of early childhood educators and care providers throughout their day. This continuity fosters development of the caring relationships that are essential to young children's emotional, social, cognitive and physical development.
- Any system of supports for children should be designed so that all children benefit equally and should include features such as:
 - Universal access
 - Accommodate operations and access 12 months of the year
 - Accommodate children with special needs
 - Funding support for a continuum of care and learning experiences for all, whether delivered in public/not-profit school or community based settings
- Those school based programs should create formal links and coordination with other related community sector supports, such as health, family support programs, preschools, parenting programs, etc. As with current Strong Start programs, the school offers a unique opportunity to connect parents with other systems of support that they would not otherwise be familiar with.
- A continuum of early childhood learning and care services must be equally available to all families who also need access to quality, affordable services for their infants, toddlers and school-age children.