

**BEST START MINI-CONFERENCE FEATURING JIM GRIEVE, ADM, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
RAMADA INN, BELLEVILLE – THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2010 – 6-9PM
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. Are schools going to receive funding for toys and equipment in Early Learning Program (ELP) classrooms?

Yes - toys and equipment will not come from grants for student needs or the EPO grant. They will be purchased through the \$200 million capital grant.

2. Are funds to subsidize the extended day going to come from existing child care subsidy?

Yes, the extended day will fund subsidized spaces through a combination of the ELP grant and licensed child care fee subsidy. Some fee subsidy will remain with licensed child care to subsidize families of younger children. Subsidy for the extended day is a work in progress. More information will be available soon from MCYS through CMSMs.

3. What role will not-for-profit child care partners play in this initiative?

In Year One (2010/2011), which will be considered a transition period, where there is a strong partnership and contracts are in place, the school board will maintain those contracts. The vision is that the board will eventually operate child care programs.

4. Is the opportunity to invest in quality – raise the quality – of child care for the younger children part of the vision? Everyone quotes the Quebec model but we know that the \$7 day is fraught with quality issues.

Jim responded with a question – if quality is an issue, who does quality assurance now? This is needed. Great tools are available that are not labour intensive.

5. What is the expected salary for an RECE in the full-day program?

The boards of education will set the salaries in their region. Although \$19.50 per hour plus benefits is currently being used as a benchmark, it will probably not stay that low for long. Employment will be available in schools for highly skilled ECEs. The need for new grads will increase in order to meet the demand for quality child care programs.

6. What will the hiring process be?

Boards are responsible for hiring. In other jurisdictions: Toronto ad went out about a month ago and 1,700 applied. The interview process will establish a bank that different schools can draw from. Kathy Soule, HPEDSB Director – we can't go there yet – still working through what the needs will be to staff 11 classes – the local Catholic board will staff 3 classes – don't know what these classes are going to look like in terms of the extended day – rural areas present unique challenges – whole new business for us to hire ECEs – union representation is an issue – we're moving forward as quickly as we can but don't want to take a leap and make the wrong move - parent fee for extended day unknown at this point – won't know final registration numbers until September - school boards are working together to provide consistency – plan to establish a uniform process in terms of salaries, training, etc.

7. Are those jobs going to be available to EAs who are currently qualified to work in kindergarten classrooms?

Legislation says that candidates must be registered with the College of ECE in order to work in ELP classrooms. EAs with this qualification may apply. EAs will continue to support four and five-year-olds through special education. For example, it is possible that a classroom with a teacher and ECE may also require the support of an EA for a child with autism.

8. Will 1:13 ratios continue in extended day classrooms?

Yes – but there will be some flexibility. If you had a class of 13 students and another pair of hands was required, a non-ECE could be brought in to assist– an EA for example.

9. Is there an intention to raise funding for special developmental supports in ELP? Early intervention refers to children under 30 months but a referral at 4 years is a concern. Many special developmental budgets have been flat-lined and programs currently have waiting lists of 9-10 months. Would you please take this to the Premier?

Full implementation of the ELP should raise the grant. Ideally, with ELP, we should see a reduction in the need for special services.

10. What are the options for parents who chose to opt out of ELP?

ELP is a voluntary program and parents may chose to pass and not enrol their child. In rural French-language schools, the experience has been that the children eventually make the choice to attend with their peers. ELP will be in every school within five years but some schools will have to wait. Boards will make their own decisions on whether children may cross boundaries to attend schools who are implementing ELP – the availability of space may be an issue.

11. Will the extended day be offered at every school as ELP is implemented?

Yes, but things could be problematic if not enough students sign up – and it may not operate. North of Sudbury – kids don't come in neat packages of 26 – you may only have 13-15 children with a teacher.

12. Who will be eligible to attend the extended day?

The target audience is 4 and 5-year-olds but schools may augment with children close in age.

13. Do predictions on the number of ECEs needed to implement ELP include staffing for both the full and extended day?

Yes, 20,000 ECEs will be required over the next five years which includes staffing for the full and extended day.

14. Will colleges need more ECE faculty?

It is a lengthy process to expand college registration. It has been suggested that colleges take a look at KPIs in other programs. If the KPI is low in some areas, colleges could boost registration for ECE program. Yes, faculty would be needed to staff ECE program expansion.

15. Where will children attending the ELP go on non-instructional days?

The ELP has not been programmed to cover non-instructional days. The Premier has asked school boards where they have capacity? This is being looked at – but parents may decide to stay where they are.

16. What will be available for siblings of children who attend the extended day?

Parents will probably make two stops. Again, boards are being asked to consider capacity. The long term vision is to accommodate children 0-12 years.

17. What about new curriculum and the training that goes along with it?

Curriculum - a new program will be available at the end of March 2010 – teachers are familiar with it – expectations for ECE and teacher will be defined – designed to give a deeper understanding – Jim hopes it will be new to everyone. Training – teachers and ECEs will come together in April – summer institutes will be held – September 2nd is a PA day and will be a day to celebrate – kindergarten and ECE teachers will spend the day together getting started!