

Every child is a world of possibilities.



Teaching: it's about the whole child.



## ETFO Briefing Notes

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### Full Day Kindergarten

ETFO supports the government's plan to provide full-day junior and senior kindergarten. It brings Ontario more in line with developed countries that have a strong commitment to the education and development of young children.

#### Other Jurisdictions

A number of government studies done in Ontario over the past ten years support full-day kindergarten. Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick all offer full-day senior kindergarten. Most European countries provide universal educational programs for children aged three to five years.

Among OECD nations, public spending for early learning and child care ranges between 0.2 per cent to 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Canada's spending is the lowest of the 14 countries for which the data are provided.

#### Benefits of Full-day Kindergarten

Current research demonstrates that full-day kindergarten programs contribute to school readiness, improved literacy achievement in higher grades, narrowing the gap in achievement levels for low SES students, improved retention rates, and better integration of kindergarten into the elementary school community.

#### Importance of Teacher Qualifications

Staff qualifications and training are key elements of a quality educational program. In Ontario, teachers must complete at least three years of university education and a year at a faculty of education. Kindergarten teachers have qualifications to teach in the Primary/Junior division, kindergarten to grade 6.

In addition to these minimum requirements, 23 per cent of ETFO's members who teach kindergarten have Primary Specialist qualifications; 15 per cent hold a Master's degree.

A 1998 Caledon Institute study of child care and kindergarten programs found that kindergarten teachers were more likely to deliver quality programs and that parents did not support replacing kindergarten teachers with college trained early childhood educators.

Qualified teachers participate regularly in professional development. Professional development is linked to enhanced student achievement.

### **Importance of Locating Kindergarten in Schools**

Elementary schools provide access to physical resources, such as gymnasiums, large outdoor play space, and libraries, and the additional skills and program support provided by specialist teachers and professional support personnel. Locating kindergarten programs in elementary schools integrates kindergarten students into the school community. Keeping full-day kindergarten programs in schools will also significantly contribute to keeping small, rural elementary schools viable during this period of declining enrolment.

### **Importance of a Play-based Program**

As Ontario moves to expand kindergarten to a full-day/every-day model, it is crucial the program be based on developmentally-appropriate philosophy and teaching practices. Play-based learning contributes to literacy development, math and science skills, and social competence.

### **Towards a More Integrated Model of Children's Services**

ETFO supports staff with early childhood qualifications being included in kindergarten programs recognizing that teachers have a legislated responsibility for delivering the Ontario curriculum.

ETFO supports an expansion of school-based child care. Child care before and after school and during lunch hour provides important support to families and contributes to a seamless day for children. Further, ETFO supports schools being used as the hub of more integrated children's services.

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. All junior and senior kindergarten programs be taught by teachers who hold a certificate of qualifications to teach in Ontario.
2. All junior and senior kindergarten programs be located in a publicly-funded elementary school.
3. The Ministry of Education actively promote the importance of inter-active, play-based learning, as outlined in the *Ontario Kindergarten Program*, to school boards and school administrators.
4. The Ontario government facilitate greater expansion of school-based hubs to coordinate children's services.

**For more information:** Check ETFO's position paper *Full-Day Kindergarten: Moving Ontario Forward*. [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

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