LISTENING TO AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR'S EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT OF ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN PILOT PROJECT

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I recently spoke to a woman about her experience as an Early Childhood Educator. During her ECE certification training she worked as an ECE with a pilot project for all day kindergarten in Ontario. There was already part day Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten in Ontario. The children were ages 3-6. She was required to write daily about her experiences.

She assumed at the time that they would not go through with the all day kindergarten policy change due to the pilot project experience.

She told me today about what she saw. I had not heard this before. The children obviously suffered. The teachers also suffered.

A few of her stories:

3 year olds getting on the school bus. It is bad enough that they are spending hours every week on a bus without a parent on top of 6 hrs/day in school away from their parents. My kids always sat in my lap on the bus at that age. The children were too short to climb up the big steps on their own but were told to be 'a big boy' and not given help to get up the stairs. Staff watched as they struggled to climb up.

A teacher losing it and breaking down in front of children and screaming at a child for eating the fruit loops they were supposed to be counting to 100 (!) with: "Why are you so stupid!" This ECE took the teacher out and comforted her and then the little child who was crying. The teacher was trying to accomplish the curriculum goals and was struggling to meet them.

Desks and writing work for 3 - 4 yr olds. One child was told, "This is play!" and responded "This is **not** play."

This formed ECE said she felt sick to her stomach about what she witnessed. Talking about it makes her weep. Me too.

Clearly what happened violated the children's Charter right to security of person which refers to mental and physical well-being. Yet this continues every day for thousands of Canadian children.