

MORE PROPAGANDA DISGUISED AS “RESEARCH”
Ontario Government’s Latest Non-peer Reviewed Study of All-Day Kindergarten

September 5, 2013

In yet another attempt to prove that it is good for society to have little children spend long hours in institutions away from their family/parents, and on the first day of school (‘timing is everything’), Ontario’s Minister of Education released (but actually did not release) a non-peer-reviewed, unnamed study by unnamed authors from McMaster and Queens Universities.

But the study itself will not be finished and available to read until October according to Laurie, the Ministry staff working on it. So NO ONE reporting or commenting has actually read the study. Reading and reasoning based in it are apparently irrelevant skills outside of early learning programs.

One thing the study proves for certain: all day Kindergarten is another mass experiment conducted on children by Canadian governments. The fact that government is attempting to justify its policy and massive expenditure *after* the fact of establishing the program shows that the policy makers know they are experimenting on children.

Unfortunately for the children, their families, and society, it is a repeat of failed experiments conducted elsewhere with plenty of solid research available.

The peer-reviewed 2010 Duke University study found:

<http://rer.sagepub.com/content/80/1/34>

*A meta-analysis found that attending full-day (or all-day) kindergarten had a positive association with academic achievement (compared to half-day kindergarten) equal to about one quarter standard deviation at the end of the kindergarten year. But the association **disappeared by third grade.***

Social development measures revealed mixed results. Evidence regarding child independence was inconclusive.

*...children **may not have as positive an attitude** toward school in full-day versus half-day kindergarten and **may experience more behavior problems.***

Another obvious non-mentioned finding is that the much-touted ‘**play-based**’ learning is heavily supplemented with desk work pushing pencils and repetition related to numbers, letters, calendars, shapes and other ‘general knowledge’ items found in the curriculum. Just check out any kindergarten class these days. That is the most effective way to boost short-term academic results for little children, however useless or harmful such methods may be in the long run.

On Sept 3, the pro-daycare/all-day K Toronto Star reported on the Min of Education’s new study:

*“Children who have had two years of full-day kindergarten are **much better prepared than others for Grade 1 and future success.**” (How do they quantify and define “future success” empirically for scholarly purposes??)*

*“...new research that suggests children who have been in Ontario’s new full-day program for two years are **dramatically better prepared — two to four times more — than others in their ability to reason and communicate, get along with others and in general knowledge.**”*

Even though the report is not even available to read, frozen fry billionaire and long time daycare/all day K lobby backer, **Margaret McCain** reportedly said, **“[I]t’s like winning Olympic gold.”**

Dr. Charles Pascal, Ontario's Early Learning Advisor and top all-day K promoter said, this *“is huge”* - ‘huge’ being perhaps educator Pascal’s favourite word – ***“it shows the program is truly a life-changer. It’s cartwheel time”***. This messiah of institutionalized childhood is quoted in the Globe and Mail saying: ***“kids’ lives are being shaped, and in many cases, saved.”*** In an earlier version of the Toronto Star article he says that there will be reduced jail time, improved health, etc for these kids and these benefits mean saving ***“\$1 trillion a year in higher need for social services”***. (This hyperbole was removed in updated version of the article.)

In this play-based factoid world we can spend our way out of debt and into salvation.

Ontario **Education Minister Liz Sandals**, says it’s ***“nothing short of incredible.”***

Incredible. Agreed.

Indeed these claims are not credible. **There is not one peer-reviewed empirical study of long-term outcomes for children in universal 'early learning' programs that demonstrates benefits over costs.** Not one. James Heckman – the Nobel Laureate in Economics routinely "grossly mis-represented" by Pascal and other all-day K promoters according to UBC economist Kevin Milligan - says ***“none of the evidence” supports such programs.*** He warns against programs that “resemble a government bureaucracy” and advocates “respect” and vouchers for parents. Ouch!

And in Sweden where all-day programs have been established for a generation, the government reports: problems of quality of care; plummeting academic scores at age 15 (now well below Canada); rising youth suicide, violence and crime; rising domestic violence against women; and women concentrated in lower pay pink collar government jobs with very high absentee rates. And that’s with spending **CND\$25,000/child/year.**

The article states that the study ***“shows children who attended both junior and senior kindergarten all day were stronger in almost all basic learning skills by Grade 1 than those who had only one year in full-day learning or didn’t go to full-day at all.”***

But that is not what the information given in the article says. The information provided says that there was a decrease in the percentage of children who scored below the “at risk” cut off on the EDI in three so-called “domains” on the EDI.

Using the EDI (a questionnaire with 100+ questions filled in by K teachers) as a source of data is problematic.

-**Potential for bias** at the data source because it is done by K teachers who are told in EDI 'training' that the EDI is a "tool for change" and that results will be used as evidence to increase support for programs such as all day K.

-**It is subjective**: teachers are asked: "Would you say that this child is average, above average, below average is...", and "How would you rate this child.."

-**There is no objective component** eg the standard test of receptive vocabulary called the Picture Peabody Vocabulary test.

-The EDI has 5 so-called 'domains'. But the minister **reported results from only 3 of 5 domains, leaving out ‘physical well-being’ and ‘emotional maturity.’** These 2 areas are the ones most likely to be negatively impacted by all day program as children are tiered and hungry and therefore lose self regulation, compliance, and empathy. (see Bad News below).

-The ‘vulnerable’ ‘cut off’ is arbitrarily set at the 10th *percentile*: **using percentiles guarantees a “problem”** - that 10% of children will be “vulnerable” in each ‘domain’, and that many more will be vulnerable in at least one of the 5 domains.

- The EDI does not actually **test children for “risk” or “vulnerability”**. It does not even ask teachers if they think a child is ‘at risk’.

BAD NEWS THEY LEFT OUT

Ministry statement <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/theresearchisin.html>

Ministry “infographic” <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/fdk-infographic.html>

EDI data <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/FullDayKindergartenData.pdf>

language and cognitive development

1 - The Ministry chose to leave out the findings that showed more children were ranked “vulnerable” after 2 years vs 1 yr of all day Kindergarten. Their EDI graphs show there were more kids classified as “vulnerable” in language and cognitive development after 2 years of all day kindergarten: it went up from 3 percent of kids in the vulnerable range after one year of all day to over 4% after 2 years of all day Kindergarten.

2 - The Ministry says: "Reduced risks in language and cognitive development from 16.4 per cent to 4.3 per cent." This enabled them to say “four” (wow!!) times reduction in vulnerability. But that was for 1 year - not 2 years - of all day Junior Kindergarten.

emotional maturity

3 - The ‘vulnerability’ rate for emotional maturity was the same for 2 years of half-day as for 2 years of all-day.

4 - In fact the chart shows that **more** (2 percentage points) kids ranked as vulnerable in emotional maturity after 2 years of all day than after just 1 year.

physical well-being

5 - For Junior Kindergarten kids, all day kids were more likely to be “vulnerable” in physical well-being the more hours or years they attended.

“vulnerable” in 1 of 5 EDI domains, “vulnerable” in 2 of 5 EDI domains

6 - There was only a drop of 5 percentage points (from 25% to 20%) after 2 years in kids “vulnerable” on one or more EDI domain. 20% are still in the “vulnerable zone” after 2 years.

There was virtually no difference between kids with 2 years or 1 year of all day in those ranked “vulnerable” in 2 of more EDI domains – both were about 9%.

no comparison to 1 year of half-day K, or no K at all

7 - There is no data for children who had the standard 1 year of half-day Senior Kindergarten (for whom they would have EDI data), or for those who had no kindergarten at all. This makes all claims about all day K meaningless.