

The Unhurried Day: Learning and Caring
Seamlessly

SYMPOSIUM REPORT

November, 2005

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Introduction

The purpose of the symposium was to generate a discussion in Canada about the policy changes that would be needed to bring about integration of early learning and child care for kindergarten age children. The OECD Report suggested that reconciling the differences between kindergarten and child care was a prerequisite to achieving a coherent system of early education and care in Canada. It explained that the advantages of bringing together early education and care within integrated departments include: a more unified approach; more effective investment producing greater savings; improved public supervision leading to higher quality; more coherent policy and consistency; and, enhanced continuity of children's early childhood experiences. (OECD, 2001)

Achieving integration of kindergarten and child care services in Canada will require a major paradigm shift for all involved. Because both education and child care are in the provincial jurisdiction, each province and territory will need to devise its own strategies. Each will also need to respond to the same challenges. These will be comprised of both "structural" and "conceptual" components.

The symposium focused on five of these challenges:

- Funding and access
- Governance
- Program framework (curriculum)
- Reorganization of the workforce
- Program design and delivery

Symposium Objectives

- To stimulate active, positive interaction
- To find solutions to the fragmentation of the two systems: Education and Child Care.

Symposium Buzz!

The Unhurried Day: Learning and Caring Seamlessly was not a decision-making conference, but from the dynamic discussions that took place, we can identify some themes and ideas for future actions. Clearly, most participants at the symposium agreed that integration for kindergarten-age children was important – most thought this was true for children of all ages. The discussion focused on how to achieve this.

National Dialogue on Early Learning and Child Care

There was general agreement that the integration discussion is an important discussion to continue. There was considerable concern that the new federal funding was not necessarily being spent to enhance early learning and child care in all of the provinces. In some provinces, the child care component seemed to be downplayed by giving funding to schools for early literacy and other non-child care programs. There was also concern that in these instances, the language of the Integration Network was being co-opted to support these developments. The importance of broadening the discussion of the importance of integrated early learning and child care for young children, and making it clear that we are talking about the integration of both child care and education, is still a high priority.

Some groups suggested that this could start with local/regional dialogues (like the symposium) to get more people thinking and talking together. Ottawa-Carleton has already taken the initiative around this and if other groups are interested, please contact Sue Colley.

Active Support of Campaigns for additional public/direct funding for early learning and child care programs

There was a profound consensus on the need for ongoing, sustainable funding – both capital and operational. Key to this is the need for providing direct operating funding to all early learning and child care services – not just kindergartens in the schools. Without this kind of funding, early learning programs, program quality and wages and working conditions of the workforce are all destined to deteriorate. Although there was recognition that the new federal government dollars distributed to the provinces was a good first start, it was emphasized that funding needed to increase substantially to support high quality programs accessible and affordable for most

parents. Participants were also adamant that expanded programs should be inclusive of children with special needs.

There are advocacy organizations working on this type of campaigning across Canada and elections offer excellent opportunities to advance the knowledge and thinking of voters and politicians.

Monitoring of curriculum initiatives to ensure they are consistent with program goals focused on the child's needs.

There was lots of agreement here that a 'curriculum framework' would be desirable, but that it must be child-centred and based on the needs of the child. There was general appreciation that children develop knowledge and understanding of the world through interaction with the world, so there should be a constructivist approach. There was a lot of interest in the New Zealand curriculum *Te Whariki* both for its content and the process of development. The Integration Network will put the *Te Whariki* curriculum framework on its website and invite discussion about how this could work for both child care and kindergarten on the website *Forum*. We will also follow provincial/territorial curriculum developments carefully and develop a report card system for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of curricular approaches in each province.

An overhaul of training and education for both early childhood educators and school teachers

Participants generally agreed that at least some child care staff needed to have higher qualifications; it was observed that higher qualifications would also attract higher wages. There was agreement that teachers should also upgrade their qualifications to include study in early child development. Further, there was agreement that training programs should eventually be joint between the two sectors. Again the need for enhanced funding to support joint professional development activities, upgrading and recertification was also emphasized.

It was also pointed out that financial incentives would be needed to encourage upgrading and Manitoba's recruitment and retention strategies were identified as an important model for change.

The Integration Network will also start a *Forum* on the important issue of workforce reform in the coming months. In addition, the Network will monitor and enter into a

dialogue with the Faculties of Education and Community Colleges to explore avenues for collaboration and coordination.

Integration of all early learning and child care programs into one ministry/department so that barriers caused by exclusive silos can be eliminated.

There was general agreement that “completely split” governance models (as at present) needed to be replaced with a superior model. Some participants liked the idea of a new “Ministry of Learning” which would embrace learning activity from 0 to 18. Again, there was concern that opportunities for parental involvement be built in to any new system. Some participants suggested combining staff from different ministries to create an inter-ministerial governance model, with one ministry having lead responsibility. Others were concerned that with this model, early learning and child care could easily fall through the cracks. It was also pointed out that it needed to be a *powerful* lead ministry otherwise it would not receive the kind of priority needed. Participants didn’t think that the governance model needed to be “one size fits all” and there could be different systems in different provinces and territories.

Flowing from the discussion on governance, participants liked the idea of exploring integration models in practice. There was lots of support and excitement about the BruceWoodgreen (Toronto First Duty) model in Toronto, but recognition that this wasn’t the only model. Symposium participants were intrigued by the idea of returning to their own communities to try to work out their own models of integration locally. People understood that achieving full conceptual and practical integration could only happen through a process of co-location, collaboration, coordination, joint working practices and eventually integration.

Ontario’s *Best Start Initiative* was viewed very much as an ‘add-on’ and not an integrated program even though it seems that integration is part of the government’s aspirations. It was also under this category that participants emphasized the need to be much more proactive about including parents in programs.

The Integration Network Project will begin to put together an “Integration Kit” in the new year to assist those working on integration practices with practical “how-to’s” and best practices.

Conclusion

Over the next few months, the Integration Network will pull together all these ideas and combine them with those in the earlier papers to produce a final policy paper on the issue of integration. We encourage everyone to visit the website and register their ideas, feedback and concerns on the *Forum*.

Also, the Network will be putting together a kit of materials oriented towards helping schools and child care programs to work towards integration in a positive way.

One good suggestion that came out of the symposium was the idea of holding regional discussions similar to the pan-Canadian symposium so that all the local players would have an opportunity to dialogue with each other.

Evening Panel: Integrating Child Care and Education: The International Context

Judy Rebick, Chair of Social Justice at Ryerson University and well-known advocate for child care and women's rights opened the Symposium on integration on Thursday, November 4.

Anne Smith, Director of Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, New Zealand, described the integrated early childhood education program in New Zealand. While divisions still exist there, integration is based on theory, philosophy, research, and political action. Since the process began in the mid-eighties, status, recognition and support for ECE has increased significantly. ECE has moved from an ad hoc to a planned approach with a strategic plan that will bring the workforce together by 2012.

Pat Petrie is Professor of Education, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London and co-author of *A New Deal for Children? Re-forming education and care in England, Scotland and Sweden*. Using "the Role of the School", the topic of 'Pedagogy' and the "Social position of children" as underlying themes, Pat provided the Symposium with a primer on the differences between England/Scotland and Sweden in the course of expanding the early childhood education sector and integrating early learning and child care. Pat concluded her presentation with the questions: "In traditional schools, can different professionals cooperate on equal footing? Does integration mean "schoolification" for children and non-teachers? Is a new sort of school possible?" This provided excellent material for consideration in subsequent discussion groups.

Kristie Kauerz, past-Program Director of Early Learning at the Education Commission of the States (ECS) described the structure and funding of programs for children of kindergarten age in the U.S. Kristie described efforts to introduce P-3 which involved: a) smooth transitions from home to school; from early learning to school; and from school to school; b) Teachers in early learning and early elementary having similar training requirements, PD opportunities, career tracks and compensation; and c) a curriculum focus on social skills and self-discipline as well as reading and math.

Day 2: The Unhurried Day: Learning and Caring Seamlessly

Janette Pelletier of the Institute of Child Study welcomed participants to the Symposium and introduced City Councillor and Toronto City Child Care Advocate, Olivia Chow, to the event. Olivia brought greetings from the City of Toronto and identified Toronto's innovative new programs, Toronto First Duty as a model for integration.

Charles Coffey, Vice-President of the Royal Bank of Canada set the stage for the symposium by emphasizing the “value-added” work of the Integration Network Project. He urged symposium participants to “push the envelope” on the dialogue about integrating early learning and care systems for young children. Charley also emphasized the importance of early learning and child care for all Canadians – business included.

Practical Integration Strategies for Consideration

Carl Corter, Chair of the Atkinson Centre for Social Change and Professor of Education at the Institute of Child Study, OISE/University of Toronto invited the panelists to describe their practical experience to the Symposium.

Linda Rossler and Judy Hillier of the Medicine Hat School District described the introduction of a developmentally appropriate full day every day kindergarten program, its benefits for the children and the support provided by the School District for this program.

Diane Wood, Principal at Coronation School in Montreal described the “Quebec Way” of offering early learning and child care where there is full-day kindergarten for children aged 4 and 5, plus out-of-school child care run by the school. Margaret McIntosh, Principal of Bruce Public School and participant in the Toronto First Duty Pilot Project described the process of developing the Bruce WoodGreen site, key elements of the program and the results of the research.

Strategies for Government

After lunch, the Associate Chair (Economics) of Management at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, Gordon Cleveland, introduced Councillor Janet Davis. Long-time child care activist, Janet also brought greetings from the City and reminded the participants that the Ontario provincial government had introduced an integrated child care reform in the early Nineties, but this was abandoned by the subsequent Government. Gordon also introduced the three panelists who described their experiences in government:

Ben Levin, Ontario Deputy Minister of Education, confirmed that the government is committed to an integrated system for young children and listed the practical steps being taken in Ontario towards integration, now known as the Best Start initiative.

Marian Tyson, Deputy Minister of Community Services, Nova Scotia described the range of collaborative actions between the Department of Community Services and the

Department of Education focusing, in particular, on the development of a pilot project for the Pre-Primary Pilot Program.

Kathleen Flanagan Rochon, former PEI Director of Child Care described the integrated kindergarten program in Prince Edward Island. She explained how it emerged out of a healthy child development strategy and a tradition of inter-departmental collaboration. Today, kindergartens are run in community programs, separate from schools and they continue to work on improving integration at all levels, as well as improving quality.

Discussion Groups

In order to develop practical solutions for improving the design and delivery of early learning and child care programs, ten discussion groups discussed the symposium sub-themes from a cross-sectoral, pan-Canadian perspective, focusing on:

- Funding and access
- Governance
- Program framework (curriculum)
- Reorganization of the workforce
- Program design and delivery

To stimulate discussion, the Integration Network Project distributed a 'vision' paper prior to the Symposium. This vision paper, *Seeing the Future: An answer to questions of integration*, sets out an imaginary scenario of the key elements of an integrated system in 2010. This paper can be found at Appendix C or visit www.

Each group discussed the sub-themes with a view to proposing both policy solutions and practical recommendations for action. Reports from each discussion group were presented to the symposium organizers for inclusion in a subsequent Policy Paper. There was a very wide-ranging discussion in each of the groups. Highlights from these discussions are printed below. There was consensus on a broad range of issues,

Funding and Access

- Operational funding needed to ensure universal access
- Sustainable funding
- Incentive funding for special needs children
- Capital Funding
- System to cover fully-accessible parental leave
- Parental fee must be affordable

- Need a lot more than \$5 billion!!

Governance

- There was not a true consensus in this area. Some participants:
 - Supported the idea of a new Ministry of Learning to cover 0-8 yrs to distinguish it from current “education” culture;
 - Suggested combining staff from different ministries in an interministerial council;
- Agreement that it should be a provincial/territorial decision
- Other suggestions included system based on local systems management
- Agreement that whatever the governance model, there must be ways to actively involve parents

Curriculum Framework

- Significant consensus in this area;
- Support for New Zealand curriculum, *Te Whariki*
- Must be child-centred based on needs of child
- Children develop knowledge and understanding of the world through interaction with the world - constructivist

Workforce Reform

- Considerable consensus in this area, although some cautions on details
- Integrated program needs integrated staff
- Grandparent existing ECEs
- Require new ECEs to hold degrees
- Need additional \$\$ to enhance qualifications of ECEs
- Multidisciplinary team with a variety of expertise
- Principals and administrators also need training

Program Design and Delivery

- High level of consensus
- Lots of support for the seamless day
- Recognition that getting to integration would involve a process of co-location; co-operation; collaboration; working together through to integration

- Lots of interest and support for Bruce Woodgreen model
- Kindergarten teachers should be part of a child care centre
- Definitely not wrap-around

Fears

- Literacy boot camps
- Lack of sustainable funding
- Lack of political will
- Fate of existing ECEs
- Vision doesn't cover 6-12 year olds
- Having too many "departments" - resulting in no clear responsibility
- What happens to "child care programs", especially for younger children.
- Lack of funding for training, recertification

Needs Clarification

- Where do family home child care providers fit?
- How do aboriginal concerns get addressed?
- How does parental involvement get built in?
- Can this work in rural areas?
- Does it have to be in schools?
- What will happen to existing unions?

Next Steps

- New policy paper
- Regional Discussions
- Information Clearinghouse
- Practical Support

Policy Conclusions

Penny Milton, CEO and President of the Canadian Education Association facilitated a process pulling together the work of the symposium to a positive conclusion.

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Addington Social Services

The Integration Network Project

The Integration Network Project addresses a critical issue in the development of early childhood learning and care (ECLC) in Canada today. That is the lack of integration or bridging between “care” programs in child care centres and “education” (kindergarten) programs in the schools. This fragmentation produces many problems for young children, parents, educators/ staff, and even governments: for example, the disruption and inconsistency which may inhibit the healthy development of children; the problems of insecurity, inconvenience and stress for parents; the problems of status and salary differentials for teachers and caregivers; and the problems of duplication, policy inconsistency and inappropriate resource allocation for governments.

Despite broad recognition of this problem in Canada and examples of apparently successful solutions from other countries, little public policy attention has been paid to these problems and very few initiatives have provided new solutions.

The objectives of the Integration Network Project are to put this issue firmly back on the ECLC agenda by establishing an active Network to produce and disseminate information articulating the problems and engaging the broader early childhood learning and care community in a “new dialogue”. Teachers, educators, parents, academics and government representatives will be encouraged to start a new dialogue about the complex problems involved and will be challenged to come up with some new policy and practice ideas to resolve the problems.

It is anticipated that a broad cross-section of the ECLC community will benefit from the richness of this dialogue, that the dynamism of a dedicated Network will develop ideas for new solutions to move the situation forward and that young children will be the ultimate beneficiaries of this project.

Through the activities of document review, discussion, debating, visioning, interacting on a very focused problem, producing and circulating discussion papers and holding a conference/ seminar, the intended results of this project are to establish an ongoing network to support and initiate new integration projects and policies across Canada.

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APPENDIX A

International Speakers' Presentations

Please see attached CD-ROM

ANNE SMITH

Integrating Care and Education in New Zealand

PAT PETRIE

Integration Network Project Canadian Symposium: Learning and Caring
Seamlessly

KRISTIE KAUERZ

Integrating Child Care and Education in the U.S.

APPENDIX B:

Panel Presentations (please see attached CD-ROM)

Practical Integration Strategies for Consideration:

LINDA ROSSLER/JUDY HILLIER, MEDICINE HAT:

Kindergarten Full Day Every Day

DIANE WOOD, MONTREAL

The Unhurried Day, The Quebec Way

MARGARET MCINTOSH, TORONTO

Toronto First Duty

APPENDIX C

Seeing the Future: An answer to questions of integration

In preparation for the Symposium taking place on November 3-4, 2005 in Toronto, the Integration Network Project advisory group has prepared a visionary piece that takes a provocative look at a reformed system for early learning and care of our youngest children. The Symposium will focus first on the vision and then on how such a vision might be achieved.

We've used our imaginations to answer key questions about what an evolved system for young Canadians might look like. We invite you to think about it, critique it, add your own suggestions and, of course, consider strategies for change.

The Vision

Remember, this is entirely imaginary!

Let's first imagine the year is 2010. The Early Learning and Child Care system has been revolutionized across the country and enjoys high levels of public support. How did we get there and what would this mean for young children and their families?

How we got there

Imagine that this fundamental change began in 2005 when policymakers questioned the foundations of the current early learning and child care systems. Early learning and child care in Canada was still deeply rooted in the split systems of "Education" and "Social Services" (or welfare). Attention to growing child poverty, apparent increase in violence, high drop-out rates and an increased focus on high levels of achievement for all students particularly those who do not do well in school precipitated a momentous public discourse about how to change the system to give children the best foundation for learning throughout their lives. Earlier, the federal government released a major report to launch an invigorating national dialogue on the future of Early Learning and Child Care in Canada in the context of lifelong learning. A broad discussion across Canada produced consensus about far-reaching recommendations for the system of Early Learning and Child Care for children aged 0-6 years.

The key recommendation involved a transformation from current arrangements to a system characterized by both vertical and horizontal integration between early learning and child care and formal schooling. Support emerged for the adoption of a new approach that emphasized the holistic nature of the child and the necessity of integrating caring, nurturing and learning under one roof. During the dialogue, the public embraced the concept of a system of lifelong learning from birth to adulthood in which the “child” became the focus of the institutions that served him or her. Learning and care were understood as interrelated and inseparable within an “integrative” approach. A focus on the full development of the child requires programs that support activities where care, nurturing and education form a coherent whole.

Strong support for this initiative was fuelled by public recognition of the value of kindergarten programs which were already universal, very popular and taught by well qualified staff who did not necessarily have a background in early childhood education. The need to build on the existing kindergarten programs was evidenced by the majority of parents who wanted and needed a learning opportunity for their younger children. Integration was achieved both conceptually and practically. Policies and programs for all children under 6 are now integrated into a universal Early Years Program under a single provincial ministry or department. For 4 and 5-year old children, whose experience had previously been split between ‘education’ and ‘child care’, full integration took place between the two programs. Previously, early years programs had frequently been described as “patchwork” roughly sewn together to meet the needs of working parents. Child care centres, nursery schools, preschools, kindergartens and a myriad of drop-in programs existed side by side in an attempt to provide a semblance of quality programming for parents who needed or wanted them.

What it means for young children and their families?

As a result of the reform, all early years programs are available under one roof with programs founded on the same principles and similar general approaches; most are in schools but some communities developed Early Years Centres in their own buildings. Considerable local autonomy is reflected in specific program implementation. This means that programs starting with parental leave are now universally available. After one year’s parental leave (now accessible to all new parents), parents can choose learning and care environments for children on a full-time, part-time, or drop-in basis.

Our imagination continues....

Subsequently, the federal/provincial/territorial governments entered into agreements to infuse new federal funding to develop a unified, integrated or coherent system of lifelong learning starting at birth. All of the provinces and territories embraced the reforms. Public enthusiasm emerged for transforming our systems so that 'child care' and 'kindergarten' became merged. Issues of governance, financing, access, curricula, human resources, and program delivery were all reshaped with an understanding that all parts of the system must come together and inform the other. By taking account of the best of what we had learned from the pre-school and early school years policies and programs, we ensured a system that served children and families rather than institutions.

The sweeping changes covered five basic areas:

- Funding and Access
- Governance
- Curriculum Framework
- Workforce Reform
- Program Delivery

Funding and Access

Funding was transformed. A key departure from the 1990s was the move away from the "marketization" of child care, based on purchase of service by parents, towards the introduction of direct (supply side) funding to the programs. Canada now spends 1% of GDP on early years' services. One of the features of the new system is that programs for all ages of children are funded with a block grant from government. Parental fees still exist but they are limited to affordable amounts. Some provinces adopted a system of "flat parental fees" for early years' education and out-of-school care. For example, the programs could charge a flat fee ranging between \$3 and \$10 per day per child for programs offered beyond six hours. Other provinces introduced a sliding scale limiting the maximum parent fee to 20% of net parental income. This resulted in universal access to all early learning and care programs for children aged 0-6 years.

In 2010, jurisdiction for early years' programs, together with funding, is provided by a provincial/territorial Ministry of Learning. For programs beyond six hours in length, modest parent fees are charged ranging between \$3 and \$10 per day per child, with additional subsidies available for those parents who cannot afford them. This was achieved over a five-year period. Like Quebec in the

1990's, most provinces expanded their systems by introducing universal access on an age-related basis: The general pattern was:

2005-06	5 year olds gained universal access to integrated programs
2006-07	4 year olds gained universal access to integrated programs
2007-08	3 year olds gained universal access to integrated programs
2008-09	2 year olds gained universal access to integrated programs
2009-10	Under 2's gained universal access to integrated programs.

Governance

Because both child care and education are within provincial jurisdiction, provinces and territories had flexibility about how the changes were implemented. The former social services and education ministries were each vested in their own cultures, traditions and value system. The change discourse focused on how these old cultural traditions and values could be transformed and which administrative environment would work the best. All provinces and territories are now working to create horizontally (between early learning and child care and kindergarten) and vertically (between younger and older children) an integrated system for children of all ages.

Following extensive dialogues, all provinces and territories decided to locate the new integrated services in the Ministry/Department of Learning. Schools were already well established in the community, they had a strong infrastructure, a tradition of universality, highly qualified staff and an ability to adapt to changing community needs. Hence, the Ministries/Departments of Education were transformed to become Ministries/Departments of Learning with responsibility for the public provision of learning programs from birth through to the time of transition to work or post-secondary education. The fears held by many early years' educators that locating programs for young children in schools could result in a greater emphasis on a highly prescriptive curriculum, were alleviated by a major shift in the perspective of the education sector. Growing acceptance of research from the learning sciences had shifted the curriculum emphasis from what teachers teach to how children learn. The renewed focus on creating learning environments that best suit young children and on the quality of the relationship between adults and children and among children was welcomed by all early years' educators, whether previously working in the pre-school or school-age sectors.

Both teacher education programs and early childhood education programs were enhanced and a curriculum framework was introduced which reinforced the practice of keeping the child at the centre of the curriculum. The importance of

the child's activities as fostering all areas of development - social, emotional, physical, and intellectual is emphasized and celebrated. Recognizing the fundamental importance and interests of parents most school boards established early years advisory groups at the system and local school level to assist in the implementation and management of the programs.

Curriculum Framework

All programs were developed as part of a seamless whole. This occurred both horizontally and vertically. Child care is no longer a welfare service for working parents. It is a vital program supporting the emergence of a culture of lifelong learning, making an essential contribution to the well-being of families and serving an economy that is reliant on the employment of parents. Governments recognized that both education and care are essential and unified their provision.

Teams of educators, drawn from both the early childhood and kindergarten sectors, work together to provide the best experience for all children in all time periods throughout the day. Because early learning and child care programs are unified, communication vertically – across all of the age groupings under 6 as children make transitions from one class to another – is routine. For example, teachers share information about individual children under 3 when they move into the 3-5 year old program, just as they did when children moved from kindergarten to grade 1.

Previously, child care curriculum was not prescribed by policy, although individual programs may have had particular curricular approaches based on local program philosophy; kindergarten programs generally had clear expectations for learning outcomes but were fairly child-centred programs with play-based activities. Elementary school curriculum was usually prescriptive as to content, expectations or outcomes. Now, the program frameworks are developmental in orientation offering a consistent theoretical underpinning throughout the early years. The curricular and pedagogical framework for children of 0-6 years now includes the following:

- Statements of principles and values that guide early learning and child care programs.
- Policies that establish program standards covering staff to child ratios, educator qualifications, health and safety provisions, indoor and outdoor learning environments, that are made available to parents.
- The broad goals that the program will pursue including the attitudes, dispositions, skills and knowledge that children at different ages can be expected to attain across all five developmental areas – social, emotional,

- physical, learning and language, recognizing a developmental continuum rather than age-specific milestones;
- Pedagogical guidelines outlining the processes through which children achieve these outcomes; for example, through experiential learning, open, play-based programming. These guidelines now describe how educators support children in their learning through adult interaction and involvement; family involvement, centre and group management; providing enriched learning environments; programs for small group experiences; and theme or project methodology for leading children to conceptual understanding.
 - At the local level, curriculum incorporates local concerns, languages and culture. Early childhood professionals work with parents to develop a specific curriculum approach that is consistent with the provincial/territorial guidelines and evaluate their own performance and children's development. The development and delivery of specific programs and activities to achieve the broad curricular goals are determined at the local level – along with the approach. Some implement specific curriculum approaches for example, High Scope, Reggio Emilia, and Montessori.

The changes went beyond the introduction of a curriculum framework. There was recognition, emphasized in a government Report that schools needed to be transformed to be “ready for students”. Schools are now engaged in shifting focus from the idea of “school readiness” in reference to the state of the child to the idea of the school being ready to receive a community's children through ongoing engagement with parents and community organizations and agencies.

Workforce Reform

Prior to 2005, two discussions dominated the field of early childhood education. The first centred on issues of recruitment and retention of child care staff in the face of stagnant wages, few benefits and poor working conditions; and the second focused on how to provide a more highly qualified workforce to meet these growing challenges.

The OECD Report delivered in 2004 as well as the federal government's report concluded that the current pre- and in-service training for the early years professions had not kept pace with more complex demands, nor did it sufficiently equip staff to respond to the social, economic and cultural challenges facing today's families with young children. Most of the discussion focused on finding career paths for early childhood educators with diplomas through easier access to degree-level programs.

The introduction of sustained public investment in early learning and care in 2005 led to narrowing the gap in training and pay differentials between the professions because they became members of the same unions which negotiated salary scales based on experience, qualifications and specific work responsibilities.

School principals were offered training and new resources to support their leadership to all teachers involved in early years' programs. This was achieved through special courses and professional development opportunities on a regular basis. Experience teaching the younger children also became identified as an important criteria for a promotion to the position of principal.

Beginning in 2005, funding for early years programs substantially increased making the prospect of attaining higher level qualifications a valid option for early childhood educators. The third step, then, was to reform the education and training for all staff working with children under 6 years old. There are now three qualifications for senior teachers of young children. Senior teachers, as they are called, have one of the following options for credentials:

- a) A 4-year university degree, plus a teaching certificate, holding an Additional Qualification specialist in Early Childhood Education;
- b) A 5-year Bachelor of Education with a specialist in Early Childhood Education
- c) A 4-year university degree in Early Childhood Studies, plus an Early Childhood Education Diploma and/or a teaching certificate.

Additional educators who must have diplomas in Early Childhood Education and/or Special Needs are integrated into the local staff teams. These educators work in the program alongside the senior teachers so that all staff working with young children have training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

By 2010, most provinces have adopted the seamless day model with teams of teachers. Certified teachers and early childhood educators were given a six-year window to complete their upgrading qualifications where necessary to meet the new standards.

Based on the experience in other countries, the government had discussed the possibility of a more major workforce reform which would move the workforce towards one "core" profession whose members work across all centre-based early learning and child care programs, not just in "education" or in "child care". The government Report recommended that eventually all staff working with children under 6 should pursue a four-year degree towards the same "core" profession. They envisioned that all teachers would take the same basic training for the first year and a half of course work and then specialize in specific subject

areas or early childhood work. Existing teachers with early childhood specialization certification and professionals with a degree in Early Childhood Studies would continue to teach in the classroom while the transition to the new qualification occurred. But, the government Report recognized that this would have to be a later step.

Toward The Seamless Day Program

The following stories of two families show us what difference the new early learning system makes for children and families.

Awet was born in Toronto. His parents were refugees from Eritrea. His mother, Tigist, a health care aide working in a nursing home, took parental leave so that she could care for her son in the first year of his life. The maximum federal Employment Insurance of \$413 per week was significantly less than her prior average earnings and so her husband Bairu, worked overtime hours at the airport to lessen the impact of his wife's income loss.

Tigist often took Awet to the drop-in program for parents and children at the local school where Awet's sister, Saweep who had been enrolled in all program segments of the Early Years' Centre before Awet's birth, now attended the Early Learning and Care program segments. Tigist developed friendships with other parents some who were on parental leave and others who had stopped out of the work world. They learned new activities that enhance children's development, shared insights into the issues they faced as parents and watched with pride as their children flourished. Tigist made a point of being at the drop-in on Wednesdays until the noon school break so that she could provide a special treat for Saweep – lunch at home with a friend from school.

As the year progressed Tigist began to think about her return to work. Like many parents she had mixed feelings. Was Awet ready to be left for a full day? What would his experience be like? The staff of the drop-in program arranged an opportunity for working parents to share their experience of this first important transition in young children's lives. Tigist was able not only to visit the child care programs within the Early Years Centre and get to know the staff but also to leave her son for parts of the day. When the time came for her full-time return to work, Tigist and Bairu had confidence in the choice they had made for the care of Awet.

The flexibility of program segments allows Tigist and Biaru to have both Awet and Saweep in the same Early Years Centre. They usually arrive before 8:00 am so that Tigist could begin work at 8:30 a.m. and left between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. The moderate fees of \$3.00 for the breakfast program and \$5.00 for the care and learning components allowed Bairu to give up his overtime shifts when Tigist returned to regular wages.

Awet and his sister, Saweep, attend first the morning breakfast program operated from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. Then Awet goes to his early learning program at 9 a.m. and Saweep goes to her Grade 1 class. Awet's next-door neighbour, Paolo, who is also three years old does not attend for the whole day. Paolo's grandmother lives with the family and takes care of Paolo while his parents work. Paolo attends the program from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. when his grandmother picks him up and takes him home.

All three staff are called "teachers" and work side-by-side to create the program, plan activities, assess children and communicate with parents. They have different responsibilities and hours. Awet's class includes two children with special needs playing alongside him and the other children. They are supported by an educational assistant with a community college "special needs" diploma. All three of the staff are at various levels of working towards upgrading their training to reach the new goals. Rose, the lead teacher, has a four-year bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Studies plus an early childhood education diploma from a community college. Sejel, a part-time teacher, has a four-year science degree plus a teaching certificate with specialization in early childhood studies. The other teacher, Michael, has a two-year community college early childhood education diploma.

The Early Years Centre operates fully all year round with staff vacations scheduled according to individual preference and the needs of the Centre.

The program is seamless, starting with the breakfast program early in the morning; engaging the children in planned activities until lunch; providing lunch in the same facility; providing an afternoon program to 3:30 p.m. and then a relaxed after-school program until parents finish work and can pick up their children. Some children opt for a part-time (mornings or afternoons only) program, while others just stay for the regular school day and others stay for the entire day. The program is also available on professional development days and school holidays.

The lead teacher, Rose, is accountable to the school principal for the quality and effectiveness of the early years' programs. She supervises Centre staff, prepares staff schedules and oversees the child assessment processes. She manages relationships with the food service, and community agencies.

At the end of the Grade 1 program each day, Saweep's "seamless day" continues with attendance in the after-school club run by the school and supervised to ensure appropriate safety and security. There she is able to play with her friends, do homework in a quiet area, or join one of the many after-school activities offered, such as swimming, soccer, art, pottery, dance, musical instrument, computer games or chess, etc. Awet continues in his program until one of his parents picks him up after work.

These are true stories. Tigist's and Bairu's story of parenting and working remains unlike that of most families in Canada today. It is the dilemmas of David and Jennifer that still resonate with many parents.

David and Jennifer have four children. After staying home until the youngest was two years old, Jennifer was ready to return to paid work. As well as the importance of increasing the family's income, Jennifer was well aware that the likelihood of being able to resume her professional career was reduced by every year she stayed out of the labour force. The two older children Michael and Karen, were in Grades 3 and 4 at the neighbourhood school. Since it had an after school day care program and a minimally supervised lunch program, Michael and Karen could stay where they were. David, a computer company sales person, could plan his work schedule to enable him to walk the older children to school around 8:30 am where they met up with friends in the school yard and later he met them back at home after the child care program ended.

But what about Tim and Samantha who were in Junior and Senior Kindergarten? Jennifer located an elementary school not far from her new office that had a childcare centre on site. Both the centre and the school had excellent reputations. Jennifer felt extremely fortunate to find that space would be available for the younger children, if she could make other arrangements until September. A newspaper 'want ad' turned up a qualified nurse seeking a short term home based position as a nanny. Jennifer interviewed and hired her. References were difficult to check because of no previous experience in Canada. Although Jennifer was determined to provide proper wages and some benefits, the employment had to be 'under the table' because the nanny was a visitor without the legal right to gain employment. But the arrangement worked well for the first few months.

In September with Tim now in senior kindergarten and Samantha beginning Grade 1 the family began a new regimen of before school care, senior kindergarten, grade school and lunch programs and afternoon childcare. A gregarious child, Tim settled in quickly. Samantha's experience was more painful. The school was much larger than her previous school and she felt lost as she tried to find her way from the breakfast program to her Grade 1 class and back again after school. She missed the sense of her older siblings looking out for her and was quite desperate for her friends in the old school in her home neighbourhood. After six weeks, David and Jennifer found their daughter's sadness in the face of valiant efforts to adjust, too much to bear, and re-enrolled her in Grade 1 in her original school. They prayed that the older children were sufficiently responsible to ensure that Samantha arrived home safely with them every day.

Although sometimes Jennifer wondered if all the juggling of work and activity schedules, arrangements for professional activity days and school holidays in two different schools and the high costs of child care and summer programs, was worth the effort, she felt sure that her children had adjusted well and tried hard to repress the nagging fear about her

seven year old should she arrive home before either parent. At the end of the school year, an excited Tim asked if he could return to school with his sisters and brother since "I don't need day care anymore". Jennifer knew this would be easier for the parents and good for the siblings but she also wondered whether organizing and disrupting children's lives around school and childcare services was the best we could do for the care and learning of young children.

Yes we can, and indeed, must do better for the families and children who currently do not have access to reliable, affordable and high quality regulated early learning and care programs. It will take concerted effort including:

1. A call for a National Dialogue on Early Learning and Child Care in the context of Lifelong Learning
2. Active support of campaigns for additional public/direct funding for early learning and child care programs
3. Monitoring of curriculum initiatives to ensure they are consistent with program goals focused on the child's needs
4. An overhaul of training and education for both early childhood educators and school teachers
5. Integration all early learning and child care programs into one ministry/department so that barriers caused by exclusive silos can be eliminated.