



School District No. 38 (Richmond)
7811 Granville Avenue, Richmond, BC V6Y 3E3

To Public Hearing

Date: July 21, 2008

Item # 6C

Re: Bylaw 8383

Tel: (604) 668-6000 Fax: (604) 668-6161

Office of the Secretary - Treasurer

July 7, 2008

SCHEDULE 7 TO THE MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC
HEARINGS HELD ON MONDAY,
JULY 21, 2008

Mr. D. Weber
Director, City Clerk's Office
City of Richmond
6911 No 3 Road
Richmond, BC
V6Y 2C1

Dear Mr. Weber:

Re: OCP Amendment Bylaw 8383 - City Centre Area Plan (CCAP)

Thank you for your letter, dated June 24, 2008 containing the OCP Amendment Bylaw 8383 - City Centre Area Plan.

The Board anticipates an increase in the number of elementary school-age children living in the City Centre Area (CCA) and that, in addition to the need for a new elementary school, at least three existing elementary schools (Tomsett, Talmey, and Anderson) will require an increase in their operating capacities.

At its June 30, 2008 Public meeting the Board discussed the CCAP and have enclosed for your consideration a copy of the government's consultation paper on Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia for Children Aged 3-5 Years. There is the possibility that public education will be expanded to early learners who may be entitled to attend public school. If this change is made by the Provincial Government it will potentially require the Board to amend its capital budget submissions in the future. District staff is presently reviewing this information.

The Board of Education (Richmond) will next have an opportunity to update the Ministry of Education regarding developments and to revise its capital budget submission in the fall of 2008. You will be kept informed as information becomes available.

Yours truly,

K. L. Morris
Secretary Treasurer

cc Trustees
B. Beairsto, Superintendent of Schools
J. Erceg, General Manager, Planning and Development
T. Crowe, Manager, Policy Planning



Consultation Paper

**Expanding Early Learning
In British Columbia
For Children Aged 3 - 5**

Early Childhood Learning Agency, June 2008



Responding to this Consultation Paper

This paper was prepared by the B.C. Early Childhood Learning Agency to encourage a dialogue and elicit views from a wide range of people and organizations on the expansion of early learning programs in British Columbia. This follows the government's commitment in the 2008 Throne Speech to:

“...assess the feasibility and costs of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds [and] undertake a feasibility study of providing parents with the choice of day-long kindergarten for four-year-olds by 2010, and for three-year-olds by 2012.”

Please submit your comments by July 18, 2008.

Written submissions can be mailed to:

Early Childhood Learning Agency
Ministry of Education
Box 9158 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9H3

Comments can also be submitted online at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/ or by e-mail to EDUC.earlylearning@gov.bc.ca

Introduction

In the 2008 Throne Speech, the B.C. government made a commitment to “assess the feasibility and costs of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds.” It also promised to “undertake a feasibility study of providing parents with the choice of day-long kindergarten for four-year-olds by 2010, and for three-year-olds by 2012.”

The feasibility study began in spring 2008. It includes consideration of available research findings as well as an analysis of costs in areas including capital, operating and human resources.

B.C.’s Early Childhood Learning Agency is also gathering views and opinions from a wide range of groups and individuals to help ensure the government’s actions are aligned with British Columbians’ needs and priorities. This paper is part of the process of stimulating dialogue.

Background

British Columbia has set a Great Goal of becoming the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. This includes a belief that our children should have access to early learning programs. Early learning is vital to life-long success and provides a foundation on which to build individual, social, and economic wellbeing.

Children between the ages of three and five are at critical stages of development. Brain research has shown that during the early years children’s brains have the most plasticity. This evidence suggests that, during this time, there are windows of opportunity when children are especially receptive to experiences that can shape their whole lives.

Most children’s early learning takes place through relationships and play and, while these can be informal, there is also strong evidence that quality early childhood programs have positive impacts on children’s future success in the school system. Programs that best guide children’s learning are developmentally appropriate to their stage of learning, play based, and designed to holistically address all areas of child development: physical, social/emotional, language, and cognitive. Evidence suggests that highly structured, academic programs that use primary school curriculum for children aged three and four do not have the desired results.

The economic benefits of quality programming in the early years have also been studied, showing significant savings in social programs when children participate in them. When programs are not high quality, then the benefits are lost. Research also shows that expanding choice for parents can have a positive effect on the workforce.

In terms of children’s development, significant research findings indicate that children who have participated in pre-school and full-day kindergarten experience positive outcomes in their academic and social-emotional development. This is true both for

children who are considered vulnerable, and for those who are not – but only when programs are well-designed and well-implemented and are followed by quality primary programs. The positive effect of pre-school programming needs to be maintained. British Columbia has limited class size in kindergarten through Grade 3 to help address these quality issues.

Other evidence indicates that sustained benefits and significant savings are highest when programs are target to vulnerable, at risk children, particularly when these programs include a parent support component.

In terms of defining “well-designed and well-implemented,” three factors appear to play a role:

- duration (how long the child has attended)
- frequency (how often the child attends) and
- intentionality (the program’s coherence and clarity of purpose, and how the learning activities are carried out).

Kindergarten and Pre-school in B.C. Today

Currently, half-day kindergarten is universally available in B.C. public schools to children who turn five before January 1 of a school year. Boards of Education are also funded when they provide full-day kindergarten to certain populations: English as a Second Language students, Aboriginal students, and designated categories of students with special needs.

The province also funds kindergarten programs at independent schools. Some First Nations band schools, funded by the federal government, offer both four- and five-year-old kindergarten.

Throughout British Columbia, pre-school, early learning and child care programs for three- and four-year-olds are offered for a fee by multiple providers, with subsidies available for families below a certain income threshold.

A range of other publicly funded early childhood programs form a network of community services designed to influence children’s healthy development. For example, StrongStart BC early learning centres offer free school-based programs for children from birth to five and their parents/caregivers.

Responsibility for early learning, child care, and early childhood development programs is shared between the ministries of education and children and family development.

Kindergarten and Pre-school in Other Canadian Jurisdictions

Across Canada, most jurisdictions are working to improve both the quality and availability of formal early learning opportunities. This work has accelerated since 2001, when the federal government began providing dedicated funding to the provinces and territories for early childhood development.

As in British Columbia, kindergarten programs across the country are primarily part-day programs for five-year-olds, delivered through the public education system at no cost to families, while pre-school and child care programs are delivered through a combination of private and not-for-profit providers.

Many jurisdictions offer a broader range of programs than those currently available in British Columbia. For example:

- New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec offer full-day kindergarten programs for five-year-olds;
- Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec offer some programs for four-year-olds; and
- Ontario provides part-day kindergarten for four-year-olds and is currently planning for implementation of full-day kindergarten for both four- and five-year-old children

In all jurisdictions, there are challenges to expansion of early learning programs. One of these is the availability of trained, qualified staff. Funding issues are also a factor. For example, Nova Scotia recently cancelled its free, voluntary pre-primary program for four-year-olds, citing cost pressures.

The International Context

A recent review of early learning in 20 countries worldwide, conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), found growing levels of interest in increasing universal access to quality early learning for children aged three to six and the importance of qualifications in the staff providing the service.

Other significant developments include:

- a trend towards combining early childhood programs with programs for primary school age children ;
- a growing belief that care and education are not separate concepts, and that quality programs for young children provide both;
- an emerging consensus that early learning programs should be led by educators with appropriate post-secondary training; and
- a trend towards full coverage by the education system for children aged three to six. Many countries are working towards offering two years of free (publicly funded) early learning before Grade 1.

In terms of service delivery, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. have similar systems to Canada's, featuring a mix of non-profit and private providers. By contrast, Nordic and other European systems are delivered entirely through local governments, public or not-for-profit organizations.

Finland, which has excellent international performance on measures of education achievement, provides every child from age one to school entry at age seven with free programs. The services for children one to five are largely provided in early learning and child care centres, with six year old children in programs provided by preschools with wrap around child care. Parents pay an average of 15 percent of costs for the child care portion.

In New Zealand, families have free, universal access for early education programs for children who are age 3 and 4 for 20 hours a week. Working parents requiring additional child care can access more service at the same site, in most cases, for an additional 10 hours a week for a fee. Subsidies are available for low income parents. These services are offered by a combination of preschools (called kindergartens in New Zealand) and other early learning programs that are both profit and community-based organizations. All programs must use the standard curriculum and have been gradually raising the standard for teacher training as part of a 10 year strategic plan. The curriculum in New Zealand for young children takes a holistic approach to children's learning.

Norway and the Netherlands begin full-day preschool access at age four. In Norway, 88 percent of children age three to six participate in preschool programs, as they move to a national goal of universal access. Their programs are a combination of public and private. In the Netherlands, publicly-funded primary education includes children from four to six years old in half days or full days during the school calendar year.

The United Kingdom provides guaranteed access to free part-day preschool beginning at age three. These are provided in a range of settings, including schools and stand alone pre-schools and child care centres. Australia provides free part day programs at age four and full school day programs at age five. Some three and four year olds receive their programs in licensed child care settings.

In Italy, there are a variety of approaches, although the programs for children age three to six must conform to Ministry of Education guidelines. In most cases, the programs are available to families from 8:30 to 4:30 with a ceiling on fees. Children may attend either full or part day. One city, Reggio Emilia, is well known world-wide for its approach to teaching in its preschools, jointly funded by various levels of government. This municipality characterizes all its programs as "early education" to dispel the notion of early learning and care being separate services.

In Ireland children are legally entitled to a free education from the age of four years. About fifty percent of four year olds access preschool. Programs for this age group operate as morning classes in elementary schools. As with many other jurisdictions, it

appears that the government in Ireland has recently embarked on a new strategic plan for services to young children, including education.

In Germany, 93 percent of children over the age of three until school entry have access to preschools. A parental cost for full work day pre-school, varies from region to region, with an average of 14 percent of services being paid for by families. France has almost 100 percent of children aged three to five in free *écoles maternelles* (preschools), which are part of the school system with a national curriculum.

Kindergarten and pre-school programs in United States vary broadly, based on state government priorities. In the US, Georgia and Oklahoma offer kindergarten to all children aged four and five. It appears that many jurisdictions are in the process of expanding programs to four year olds, but few have yet achieved universal access. In 2006, over 20 percent of four year old children in the USA attended publicly funded preschool or pre-kindergarten. The federally-funded Head Start program across the country targets three and four year olds from low income families. Great interest has been generated in the last few years across the USA in increasing access to pre-school programming, supported by new knowledge about children's brain development and favourable economic theories about raising human capital by investing when children are young. Given all this activity, it is likely that publicly-funded programs for three and four year old children will continue to increase in the USA.

Invitation to Respond – Part One

Given the importance of the early childhood years and the clear trends to increase and improve programs in other jurisdictions, the Early Childhood Learning Agency invites your response to the following questions.

1. **What are your thoughts on full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds?**
2. **What about parent choice for full-school-day pre-kindergarten programs for four-year olds?**
3. **What about parent choice for full-school-day pre-kindergarten programs for three-year olds?**
4. **What do you think are the most important factors to consider in expanding early learning programs in British Columbia?**

Invitation to Respond – Part Two

Please provide the following information about yourself and/or your organization. This will help ensure that the government hears from a wide range of individuals and groups.

To help us understand your perspective on the issues, please check the box or boxes that best describe you.

- I am a parent with a child under five
- I am a parent with children over five
- I provide child care services
- I am an early childhood educator
- I am a kindergarten teacher
- I am a teacher in Grades 1 to 12
- I teach in a post secondary institution
- I am a researcher
- I am a member of the business community
- I provide health or social services
- I am an interested member of the public
- I am responding on behalf of an organization

If you checked the last box, please provide the name of your organization:

You do not have to provide your name, but you may do so if you wish:

Please submit your comments by July 18, 2008.

By mail: Early Childhood Learning Agency, Ministry of Education
Box 9158 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria BC V8W 9H3

Online: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/

By e-mail: EDUC.earlylearning@gov.bc.ca

Note: The information gathered in response to this paper will inform recommendations to the government. This is only one of the sources of information that will be considered.

Early Childhood Learning Agency Response Form

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