

Full day kindergarten in Canada

Newfoundland and Labrador will become the newest members of the Full Day Kindergarten club starting in 2016. The province's March 27, 2014 budget includes a plan for new capital spending to retrofit schools for 5-year-olds and the hiring of 140 additional teachers.

This is a quick look at kindergarten in the rest of Canada.

British Columbia : B.C. phased in full day kindergarten over two years starting in September 2010. Some BC schools had offered full-day programs for specific groups of children (Aboriginal -students, English-language learners and some special needs students). Plans for junior kindergarten and preschool for 3-year-olds have been put on hold.

Alberta : Kindergarten programs are not included in the *School Act*, yet most school jurisdictions provide programs and although not mandatory, almost 95 per cent of Alberta's children attend. Programs are provided on a half-day basis or every other day. Studies of pilots in Calgary, Edmonton and the Northern Lights School Division show positive results when full-day kindergarten is offered, particularly for disadvantaged students. The author of the Edmonton study notes that some children came into the kindergarten program at a huge disadvantage. But the end of the school year the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children had been eliminated.

Saskatchewan : School boards are required to provide 5-year-olds with a minimum of 80 full school days of programming. School divisions offer alternate full day kindergarten while others offer half day, every day. The Provincial Panel on Student Achievement recommends universally accessible, non-mandatory, full-day, every-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds.??

Manitoba : All school divisions offer kindergarten in Manitoba. The Education ministry does not track how many school divisions offer half-day, full day or alternating-day programs. The province's francophone school division and some urban school divisions provide full-day kindergarten.

Ontario : Starting in September 2015 all 262,000 4- and 5-year-olds in Ontario will have the option of full-day kindergarten. Average class sizes of 26 students are lead by an educator team of a teacher and an early childhood educator. French-language school boards in Ontario have offered full day kindergarten and junior kindergarten for more than 10 years. Some French language boards are extending preschool options to 3-year-olds.

Québec : Starting in 1999, non-mandatory full-day kindergarten has been offered to all children in Québec who are 5 years old before October 1. Maximum class size is 20.

Prince Edward Island : Mandatory full-day public kindergarten program has been available since 2010. Taught by early childhood educators in training for a teaching degree, the class maximum is 15 students.

New Brunswick : Compulsory schooling for 5-year-old children has been in place since 1991 for all English and French schools in New Brunswick. The program is not quite a full day because the day for all primary students ends about an hour earlier than their counterparts in Grades 3 to 5.



Nova Scotia : Since 1995 Nova Scotia has offered a full-day, full-week pre-primary program. The program is focused on school preparation and purposely not called ‘kindergarten’. Some schools offer programs for 4-year-olds. The province is again piloting a 4-year-old option.

Northwest Territories : Most school boards offer full day 5-year-old kindergarten. Starting in September 2014 full day junior kindergarten will be phased in for 4-year-olds over the next three years.

Nunavut : Kindergarten and regulated child care are both under the Department of Education. Kindergarten is delivered in public schools under regional school operations. It is available to all five year olds for no fewer than 485 and no more than 570 instructional hours per year and no more than six hours/day. The District Education Authorities in each community determine hours of attendance within these parameters. Kindergarten is not compulsory. However, most students attend.

Yukon : Most school boards offer half-day programs for 4-and 5-year-olds.

Kerry McCuaig
Early Childhood Policy
Atkinson Centre, OISE
kmccuaig@rogers.com