

A woman with a child on her back is flying a kite in a field. The kite is colorful and is flying in the sky. The woman is wearing a white shirt and pink pants. The child is wearing a white shirt and pink pants. The field is filled with tall grass. The sky is blue.

PEI's Preschool Excellence Initiative: Expanding preschool for all

Presentation to the PEI cabinet and deputy ministers
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PEI – Expanding Preschool for All

Vision: All Island children will have access to a sustainable Provincial Early Childhood Education system that is available, affordable, and of high quality.

Current status

- Licensed programs ages 0 - 4 years, 2355 spaces
- 47 Early Years Centres with approximately 1800 spaces
- Programs operating under capacity
- Vacancies are supported with public operating grants (Approximately \$4,000/space in EYCs)



Closing the gap/improving outcomes

CHANCES/MWMFF Universal ECE access project

- 15 hours of preschool programming in a CHANCES Early Years Centre for children exiting Best Start at age 3, who would otherwise not be able to participated.
- Start date: March 2012
- Enrolment: 110 (September 2016)
- Additional cost per child: Approximately \$1700/child (FTE)

Findings:

- Nearly all eligible children enrolled.
- Attendance rate was better than regular participants.
- Drop out rates were less than regular participants
- Developmental progress as measured by the Early Years Evaluation exceeds expected trajectories



Opportunity

Recommend: Reduce the parental contribution, including the option of no contribution from families on social assistance and delink subsidy eligibility from parental labour force participation.

- Provides continuity for families transitioning from Best Start
- Provides stability for children, families and programs
- Complements the province's pending anti-poverty strategy
- Aligns with the pending FPT Early Learning and Child Care Frameworks
- Supported by research:
 - Children: Reduced vulnerability, smoother transitions to school, enhanced vocabulary and reading comprehension
 - Parents: enhanced labour force participation, address health & education needs



Reducing risk in families

Of the families with children enrolled in the CHANCES/MWMFF demonstration project:

- 73% have past or current involvement with Child Protection Services
- 35% have past or current issues with addictions
- 66% are single parents
- 32% have past or current domestic violence in their partner relationship
- 33% have past or current issues with mental health
- 23% of children have presented with special needs
- 5% are new immigrants



Costs

- Annual cost for one child to attend a vacant, full time space in an early years centre approximately \$3,800
- Could be funded by PEI's share of federal early learning and care contributions.



Professional Learning agenda to support quality

- Program Observation Tool – informs EYC Action Plan
- Peer learning
- Mentoring
- Learning stories



Raising the bar on quality essential

- Recent external program quality assessment using ECERS-3 shows alignment with improvements noted in the Program Observation Tool.
- Moving forward recommend: An ECE degree for pedagogical leaders working in Early Years Centres



Accountability

CHANCES is working with researchers at UPEI and PEI government to create a data repository with the potential to link data sets (beginning with health and education data) already collected by departments and community agencies. Similar efforts in other jurisdictions show the value of these repositories to inform policy development and effective practices.

- Recommend a province-wide repository for the collection of existing data sets for research, policy and practice development and accountability purposes.



Recommendations:

- Reduce the parental contribution, including the option of no contribution from families on social assistance and delink subsidy eligibility from parental labour force participation.
- Provide 15 hours/week in Early Years Centres for all children leaving Best Start
- Require an ECE degree for pedagogical leaders working in Early Years Centres.
- Develop a repository for the collection of existing data sets for research, policy and practice development and accountability purposes.