

Full-day junior and senior kindergarten in Ontario, Canada: Innovative policy and practice

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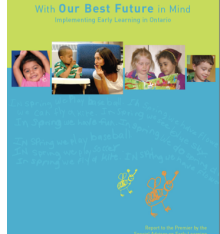

The political context: Ontario

- ❖ Moving from fragmented to integrated
- ❖ A universal system of high-quality care & education as part of the school system
- ❖ The new policy begins with full-day K for 4 & 5 year olds
- ❖ Goal: add younger children over time



The policy promise

- ❖ Schools provide full-day learning for 4 & 5 year-olds
- ❖ Fee-based extended day child care
- ❖ Teaching team of registered ECE and qualified K teacher to cover entire day




Our Best Future
Early Learning
in Ontario

In spring we play baseball. In spring we can fly a kite. In spring we see blue skies. In spring we have fun. In spring we go swimming. In spring we play soccer. In spring we eat a kite. In spring we...

An innovative policy meant to level & improve the playing field

- ❖ Access to services for young children is limited for some families, especially marginalized
- ❖ Targeted programs do not reach all who can benefit and may marginalize those who do participate
- ❖ Disconnected services are less effective in meeting the intersecting needs of children and families
- ❖ Universal access to full-day early learning kindergarten (FDK) addresses all of above

The Curriculum



- ❖ Personal and Social Development
- ❖ Language
- ❖ Mathematics
- ❖ Science and Technology
- ❖ Health and Physical Activity
- ❖ The Arts

Play-based program

Program Aims

live and learn within families and communities. The program aims to provide every child with the kind of support he or she needs in order to develop:

- self-regulation
- health, well-being, and a sense of security
- emotional and social competence
- curiosity and confidence in learning
- respect for the diversity of his or her peers

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LEARNING

Previous research informed FDELK (FDK)

- ❖ Toronto First Duty (<http://www.toronto.ca/firstduty/>)
- ❖ Informed the design of Ontario's FDK AND the research



It's all about scaling up and implementation....

What does the research say?

Research design of Peel Region study

- ❖ Full-day kindergarten & half-day kindergarten control groups
- ❖ Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative)
- ❖ Examine Implementation & impact on: Staff, Parents & Children
- ❖ Longitudinal: Junior Kindergarten-Gr 6 (provincial test scores to be added)
- ❖ Measuring success and telling the story



Demographics

Program	Gender	ELL	Mothers' Education*	Fathers' Education*	Preschool Experience
Control	49% boys	61% ELL	4.74	4.69	3.87
FDK	54% boys	61% ELL	4.53	4.26	2.66

Results to date

- ❖ We have followed the first cohort of children to Grade 2 (2010-2011)
- ❖ We are currently following a later implementation cohort (2012-2013)



Measures: Staff

- ❖ Key informant interviews
- ❖ Staff surveys
 - ECEs
 - Kindergarten teachers
- ❖ “Indicators of Change” focus groups



Brief summary of staff survey results

- ❖ Professional benefits of ECE and K teacher team
- ❖ Benefits to families
- ❖ Social & emotional benefits to children
 - Two educators
 - Full day with fewer transitions
- ❖ Hierarchy & “power” issues with staff
- ❖ Professional and legal issues (Romona Ganathan)
- ❖ Strong school leadership needed

Parents

- ❖ “Daily hassles” surveys
 - 218 mothers
 - 63 fathers
- ❖ Ratings of children’s readiness
 - 586 parents



Parenting Daily Hassles Questionnaire 42 items (parenting stress)

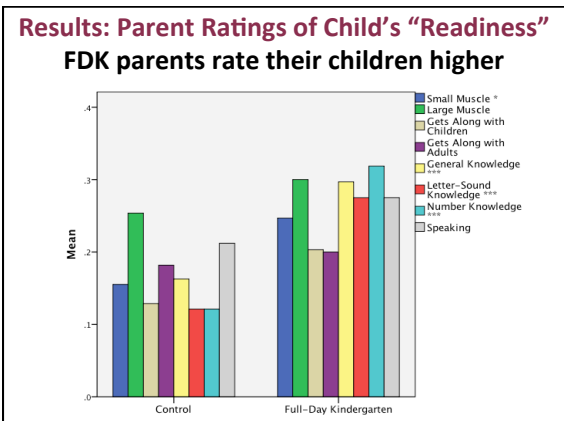
It's difficult to...	How often it affects you				How much of a hassle it has been for you					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	NO Hassle			BIG Hassle	
To get my child ready in the morning.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
To find the time to make my child's snacks and lunch.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
To transport my child to school or child care in the morning.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
To leave my child in the morning because s/he gets upset.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
To interrupt my day or make special arrangements to get my child from school to child care (or from child care to school).	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
To worry about my child's safety as s/he is taken back and forth between child care and the school.	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4

Parents: Top 5 stressors across both programs

- #1 “get my child ready in the morning”
- #2 “find the time to participate in my child's classroom activities”
- #3 “know whether my child is learning enough in school”
- #4 “find the time to play with my child”
- #5 “know what programs or services are available in my community”

Brief results: Program differences in “parenting daily hassles”

- ❖ Significant difference between parents of half-day and FDELK parents on 14 items
- ❖ In cases of difference, parents of half-day kindergarten children reported greater hassles than parents of FDELK children
- ❖ Fathers more hassled than mothers



Number of children

- ❖ Full Day Kindergarten (9 sites) = 328
- ❖ Control Half Day Kindergarten (7 sites) = 221
- ❖ + Best Start Integrated (5 sites) = 329 (not reported here today)

Child measures

EDI, children, EQAO, HTSK

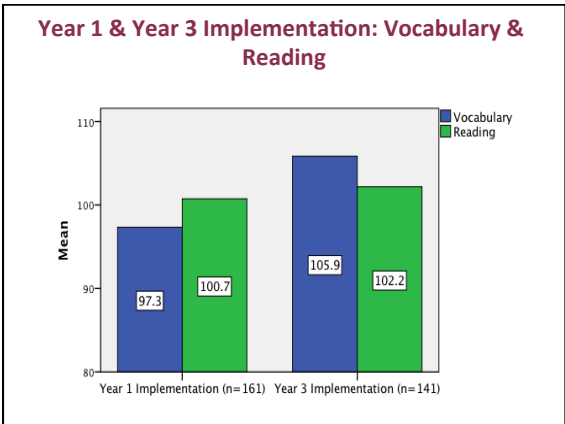
Vocabulary, Early reading, Number knowledge, Drawing: This is me waiting to go on the computer at daycare, Puppet interview: Social & emotional understanding

Brief summary of "academic" results: Vocabulary, Reading, Writing, Number Knowledge

- ❖ Full-day K children have remained ahead of half-day children in vocabulary (and self-regulation)
- ❖ At the end of kindergarten, FDK children were ahead in most academic areas but by Grades 1 and 2, half-day children had begun to catch up
- ❖ Longitudinal study will allow us to examine longer-term effects

Implementation effects

- ❖ Our study allows us to compare children who were in the first cohort of FDK implementation (2010-11) with children who were in the third cohort (2012-13)
- ❖ A new half-day control group was recruited for Year 3 implementation



Hearing from children

- ❖ Children’s voices should be among those heard in early childhood program research
- ❖ Quality of children’s day-to-day experiences should be a concern in its own right
- ❖ Children choose to participate in research through active consent
- ❖ Experience is enjoyable for children

(Dockett & Perry, 2005; Lansdown, 2005; Smith, Duncan, & Marshall, 2005)

Child interview with finger puppets

Choose a puppet for yourself and one for me...



Half-Day Control Script

I wait for Jacob and Noah to get out of Ms. [kindergarten teacher’ s] class so we can get into the car...and then we drive to [babysitter]’ s house and then we have snack...and then we go to the basement and play...and then we come back upstairs to do some work and then we wait for our mommy to come and then we go. Jacob stays at [babysitter]’ s. Me and Noah to a daycare.

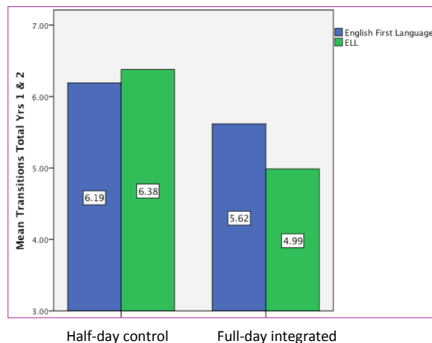
Half-Day Control – SK

I go on the bus. Then I wait for my bus stop but sometimes I run into a bad friend of mine Danika. Then it’s finally my bus stop and I get off and go to my Mom but now I always have to go to my Mom’s friend’s store.

SK Full Day

My teacher does morning message. Then we play and it's snack time. And we got muffin for snack time. And then it's recess and then we went back in and then we sitted down. And then we learned some stuff and then we went to play. And then it was lunch time and we had bread for lunch with butter inside and cheese sticks. And then it was recess. And then we got to go back inside and we didn't get to change because it was home time. And then my Mom picked me up and I went home....**These puppets really work!**

Fewer transitions mentioned in FDEL



What kindergarten children say about work and play

PLAY

- ❖ Activities that are voluntary, self-chosen, and student centered (Ceglowski, 1997; Robson, 1993)
- ❖ A reward for completing teacher-directed work (Howard, 2002)

WORK

- ❖ ANY activity assigned by an adult
- ❖ ANY activity including an adult (Howard et al., 2006; Robson, 1993)

Why do kids go to school?

- ❖ To play
- ❖ So you can learn stuff
- ❖ Cause it's fun
- ❖ Because my mom wants me to learn things
- ❖ Because the bus driver takes me
- ❖ To get teached
- ❖ Because it's against the law

What's important about kindergarten?

- ❖ To play
- ❖ To share
- ❖ It's about we can have fun and learn stuff and have fun
- ❖ Um, playing with your friends
- ❖ Kindergarten is important to learn how to write
- ❖ To work
- ❖ Doing work
- ❖ For you to study
- ❖ You learn for grade 1, and the important thing in grade 1 is to learn more about grade 2, then 2 to 3, 3 to 4, 4 to 5 – the last grade...grade 5 learns about teenagers and then they learn about almost grown-ups

What do you like best in Kindergarten?

- ❖ Playing with my friends
- ❖ Playing games, playing in the sand, playing in the water, and playing in the house
- ❖ The blocks, those are my best toys

What don't you like in Kindergarten?

- ❖ When people hurt me and scratch me and stuff
- ❖ I usually don't like it when people don't let me play anywhere
- ❖ I just don't like fighting in Kindergarten

Coding

- ❖ Qualitative data were coded thematically and scored for the presence or absence of two themes: social and/or academic responses.
 - **Social activities** included responses that related to play and peer interactions
 - **Academic responses** included discussion about learning, work and specific academic curriculum areas.
- ❖ Inter-rater reliability of 95% was obtained for the coding of children's interviews.

Results: interviews *

- ❖ What is important about kindergarten
 - Children in FDK report social activities significantly more often
 - Children in FDK report academic activities significantly less often
- ❖ However there was NO difference in what children reported as what they like about kindergarten
 - All children liked play and social activities more than any other aspect of kindergarten

* Heagle, Timmons, Hargreaves & Pelletier, 2015, submitted

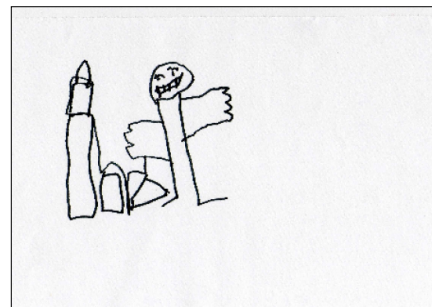
Drawings: Draw yourself doing something here



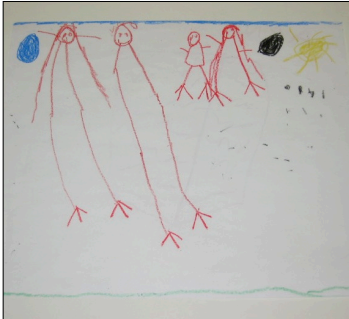
I'm playing with my friends at school (F 5 yrs)



It's the blocks...5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I'm a monster. I'm playing with blocks and I'm a monster. I'm a bat. (M SK)



Me and my friends playing (F 4 yrs)



This is me doing the letter "c." This is my friend Maryam. She's doing the lower case "c." This is Nick. Those are my friends. They're doing their work. (F SK)



Scoring the drawing task

- ❖ For complexity
 - mental reference lines
 - real reference lines
 - integration of parts of drawing
- ❖ For detail (body and face details)
- ❖ For themes (social - friends, play, academic)



Brief results: Drawings

- ❖ Themes: No program differences with respect to type of activity
 - ALL children drew social scenarios and play more than any other theme
- ❖ Complexity: FDK children drew more complex and detailed pictures

* Rothschild, Simons-Ghafari & Pelletier, 2015, submitted

Self-Regulation



Self-regulation


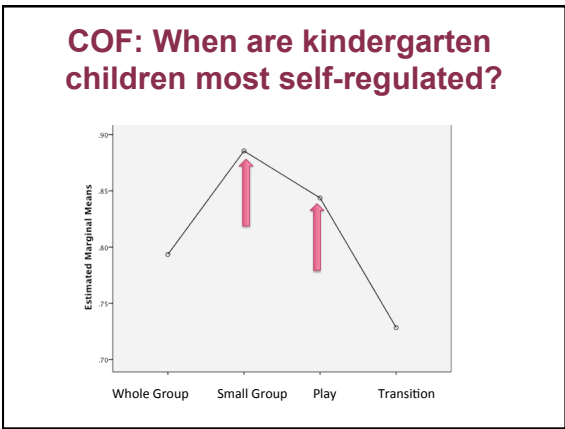
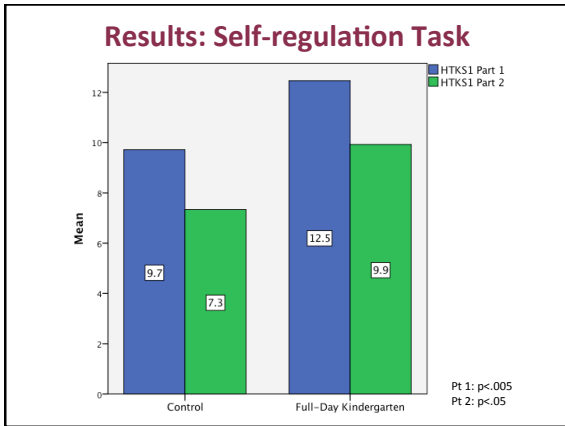
- ❖ Self-regulation was measured using two tools:
 1. Head, Toes, Knees, Shoulders (HTKS) (McLelland & Cameron)
 2. Child Observation Framework (COF) (see Corter, Janmohamed & Pelletier, 2012)



Child Observation Framework (COF)

Continuous running records were completed during 10-minute intervals in four contexts

- ❖ Small group
- ❖ Whole group
- ❖ Transition
- ❖ Play

When are children most engaged?
During play and small group time

When do educators do most teaching/instruction?
During whole group time

When do educators do most behaviour management?
During transition time

- ### In summary...
- ❖ Research (to date) is suggesting that FDK:
 - Contributes to innovation in early learning teaching with staff team partnership
 - Helps parents
 - Appears to result in greater gains for children in some areas particularly vocabulary and self-regulation
 - FDK children are learning through play (& can report on that)
 - FDK provides a UNIVERSAL system of early learning on the “school platform”
 - ❖ Next step: A new research grant to follow the children to Grade 6

Example of uptake of research: government, public policy

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 October 16, 2014 | [Dr. J. J. J.](#)

Ontario's Full-day Kindergarten: A Bold Public Policy Initiative
 June 1, 2014 | [Dr. Janette Pallister, University of Toronto](#)

Can Ontario's universal full-day kindergarten program help to level the playing field? The list of possibilities is long: closing the gap of language experience of kids living in poverty, meeting all vulnerable kids, including those in the middle class, providing support to families who need child care, and ensuring that care and education are combined in high quality programs that boost overall child development as well as academic skills and economic success. Research has shown that many of these

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THANK YOU