

SECTION: POSITION STATEMENTS

POLICY: Integration of Early Learning and Child Care and Education

APPROVED DATE: Board of Directors, November 30, 2009

REVIEW DATE: Board of Directors, March 22, 2010

Board of Directors, June 14, 2010

Board of Directors, February 28, 2011

Board of Directors, September 24, 2012

Board of Directors, September 29, 2014

Board of Directors, January 30, 2017

Board of Directors, September 24, 2018

Board of Directors, September 28, 2020

The Manitoba Child Care Association is in favor (Board of Directors, April 25, 2009) of exploring the feasibility of integrating the early learning and child care system and the education system.

We recommend provincial leadership to establish an inter-sectoral working group made up of government members, education and early childhood department officials, as well as representatives from the education and early learning and child care systems. The working group must be led by an individual with appropriate expertise in both education and in child care who is specifically contracted and resourced by the Province to carry out the mandate.

Early learning and child care facilities from urban, rural, northern, remote locations must be fully consulted and included in initiatives leading to system re-design. The province must ensure all child care facilities are fully informed, regularly briefed, and adequately resourced throughout transitions, whether introduced provincially or school division by school division.

We support these principles as a starting point:

- there be an Associate Minister of Education to lead the work on the Early Learning and Child Care Division within Manitoba Education, with responsibility for legislation and regulation; best practices; policies and procedures; funding and grants; program and administrative support; workforce planning, classification, and development; subsidy; online registry
- Manitoba's early learning and child care services under the Ministry of Education must include a variety of coordinated, comprehensive, programs for children birth to 12 years, which are available, accessible, reliable, inclusive, affordable, and not for profit. This includes service options for urban, rural, northern, and remote families who choose full time, part time, nursery school, occasional, emergency, extended hours or other unique needs
- integration of the two systems must be carefully pre-planned to ensure a smooth transition, and a true and equal partnership. There must be substantial lead in time, and complete engagement and communication with all stakeholders in advance of changes.
- an integrated system must strengthen governance, funding, relationships, use of shared space, children's learning and support programs, and the child care workforce.

- governance be provided by a body separate from school divisions
- there must be a Community Early Learning and Child Care Standards Act or equivalent as the governing legislation, to define how the system is governed and funded and to establish the regulations for services
- cultural diversity and social inclusion including recognition of the rights of Aboriginal, francophone, and minority communities, is enhanced where quality ELCC services exist for children and families
- regulations for ratios, group sizes, training requirements for full and part day early learning and child care programs not be changed unless enhanced
- there be a true and equal partnership between the education and child care systems, which includes child care within the learning continuum from birth forward and based on the educating principles of consistency, collaboration, communication.
- the provincial curriculum must begin in preschool. Every educator in the earliest years must use a child centered, developmentally appropriate, play-based approach that develops the whole child, physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively
- the preschool years are recognized as an important and unique time in human development and not merely a period of preparation for kindergarten entry
- all decisions will be made based on the best interest of children and families
- the distinct knowledge, skills, abilities, and contributions of Early Childhood Educators be recognized and included as equal partners in early learning and child care
- the serious shortage of licensed child care means thousands of children receive out of home care provided by non-family members in settings that are not formally evaluated nor accountable for quality of health, safety, or learning environment. As all environments shape lifelong learning, development, behavior, health and wellbeing, our provincial strategy on early child development must plan for the wellbeing of ALL children, not just those whose parents are lucky to get a licensed child care space.

Governance for an Integrated System:

The education system is respected, well established, and has an existing infrastructure that includes many components missing from the child care system. Education monitors student enrollment projections and patterns to ensure accessibility; they have a way to identify gaps, build or renovate in response to changing or evolving needs; their governance model includes elected trustees and division administrators who are trained and supported in their role. Child care relies on parent volunteers with the knowledge, time, and energy to establish new programs and oversee governance. Child care administration relies on one Executive Director to be skilled in all facets of management including program, organizational, financial, human resource, often without specialized training nor with a support system in place.

As child care evolves and expands, significant changes are required to strengthen governance and administration. Government policy to co-locate child care centres within school buildings is naturally bringing the sectors together, however simply being housed together does not address the weaknesses in the child care system.

Therefore,

- the governing body must receive resource, training, and support to learn about Manitoba's early learning and child care system, appropriate practice, current approaches to preschool education, child development, etc.
- the governing body must have enhanced provincial funds made available to support the additional costs that arise and additional resources that will be needed
- parents must be included in the governance model

Programs:

- are inclusive of a broad range of family support services, such as resource and referral, toy lending library, parent-child programs
- allow for significant daily personal contact between parents/guardians and educators
- volunteers are not required for the program to operate, for example, parent volunteers in the licensed nursery school are extra, not fundamental to the program
- pedagogical support is provided to ensure a developmentally appropriate, coordinated play based curriculum
- are integrated into all aspects of community planning and development
- minimizes liability risks by requiring all child care programs located in schools to be licensed, regardless of 2(1) (c) and ensures all facilities have the people, the funds, the expertise, and the support to meet all licensing requirements
- ensures children and parents experience a seamless day by identifying and resolving issues that complicate parents efforts to acquire licensed child care within their school catchment area or school of choice, have access to busing, obtain hours of child care service that wrap around their work hours and school holidays
- early learning and child care centres and family child care homes not located in schools be linked to a school to facilitate communication, collaboration and consistency
- all human resource personnel from child care and school administration be expected to, and assisted to learn more about each others roles and responsibilities, about appropriate practices and approaches to preschool education, child development, and procedures established to communicate and collaborate in decision making in areas of joint interest
- that strategies are identified to foster the eventual establishment of shared goals and complimentary plans for a common programming framework, which provides a child centered, play based

curriculum that integrates learning across all developmental domains, inclusive of all children ages 0 – age 12

- that Early Childhood Educators be included as part of the classroom staff team in all full and part day nursery and kindergarten early learning programs located in schools
- wrap around child care services be available from 6:00 pm to 7:00 am, as needed within neighborhoods
- that provincial funding of full day preschool and school age child care services be in addition to and not instead of the funding increase to support competitive wages, and the ongoing development and enhancement to licensed child care services
- child care should have dedicated space and equitable access to school resources, whether indoors or outdoors

The Manitoba Child Care Association supports:

1. The recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development:

- to build bridges between child care and kindergarten
- that integration of kindergarten and child care would bring real advantages
- to conceptualize and deliver care and education as one seamless program
- that provinces should have a single responsible department

2. The full report by Dr. Charles Pascal, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, which describes a universally accessible, high quality, publicly funded, comprehensive child and family service system under strong provincial leadership.