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IMPLEMENTING THE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

October 2009

Purpose

- To provide school boards and other stakeholders with:
 - an overview of the government's plan for implementing the new Early Learning Program for 4- and 5-year-olds, and, more specifically,
 - the planning steps that boards are expected to take to implement this important initiative in Year 1 (2010-11) and Year 2 (2011-12).

Government's Commitment

- The government has committed to support a phased implementation of a full-day early learning program for 4- and 5-year olds, to begin in September 2010-11.
- This commitment includes an investment of \$200M in 2010-11, which grows to \$300M in 2011-12.

Phased Implementation

- Implementation will involve the Province, school boards, and municipalities. To ensure a smooth transition, and in keeping with the current fiscal realities, the new program is being phased in at schools across the province.
- The government will allocate \$200M to support full-day early learning for about 35,000 4- and 5-year-olds starting in September 2010. This figure represents 15% of the JK/SK population.
- Funding will grow to \$300M for 2011-12 to expand the full-day program to about 50,000 students, or roughly 20% of the JK/SK population.
- The program will be expanded to more schools in the future and, at maturity, will be available to all 4- and 5-year-olds. The goal is to have Early Learning fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16.

Role of Boards

- School boards will have a lead role in achieving the province's vision for early learning.
- The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services will work with school boards to support this initiative.
- Successful implementation of the Early Learning Program will require boards to consult and work closely with their school communities and other partners, including coterminous boards, municipalities, and local Best Start Networks.

Ministry Support

- The curriculum will be updated in line with this initiative. The Ministry intends to review the Kindergarten Program (2006) and Early Learning for Every Child Today (2006) and release an updated draft document for use in Early Learning schools in spring 2010. Stakeholders will be consulted in the development of the draft document.
- To support implementation, the Ministry will be organizing professional learning opportunities and networks for board implementation teams.
- Early learning education officers in the Ministry's regional offices will be available to assist boards and will be preparing a list of board and Ministry contacts, as well as organizing regional meetings to support Year 1 implementation.
- To help ensure further support for boards, the Ministry welcomes Jim Grieve as the Assistant Deputy Minister for the Early Learning Program Division. Jim will be providing additional information on the program in the near future.

Length of Day/Year

- The core program will be delivered Monday through Friday during the instructional day (such as, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.).
- Extended-day programs, which are optional for students, must be provided by boards before and after school in locations where there is enough take up to make such programs sustainable.
- Fee subsidies will be available for some families who need help with the cost of the before- and after-school programs. Parent fees will be used to cover extended-day costs. The core program will be funded by the Province.
- The new program, including the extended-day program, will be delivered over the course of the traditional school year.

Classroom Staffing

- The core program will be delivered during the instructional day by an elementary teacher and an Early Childhood Educator.
- Teachers will be funded based on the teacher salary and benefits benchmarks in the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). Prep time will be funded at the 2010-11 standard of 220 minutes per week.
- Early Childhood Educators will be funded in 2010-11 based on an hourly benchmark for the core program.
- At maturity, the core program is projected to support an additional 3,850 teachers and 9,500 Early Childhood Educators.
- The extended-day programs will be delivered outside the instructional day by board-hired Early Childhood Educators.

Class Size

- Class size for the Early Learning Program will be funded based on a board-wide average of 26 students.
- Boards are expected to plan their classes carefully to meet the target class size of 26. The Ministry will work with boards to ensure that classes conform as closely as possible to this class-size target.

Class Size Reporting

- Classes created as part of the Early Learning Program will be excluded from the boards' calculation and reporting of both primary class sizes and board-wide elementary class-size averages.
- JK/SK classes outside the Early Learning Program will continue to be subject to the Primary Class Size caps and will also continue to be used in boards' calculations and reporting of elementary class size.
- Boards will be expected to report on their Early Learning Program class sizes, and this information will be available to the public through the Class Size tracker.

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Funding Approach

- In 2010-11, all JK/SK students will continue to be funded through the GSN for a half-day, as they are now.
- Funding for the additional half-day of the core Early Learning Program will be calculated based on GSN benchmarks, but will be provided outside the GSN through Education Programs, Other (EPO). We expect that this funding will move into the GSN in 2011-12.
- JK and SK students enrolled in the Early Learning Program will continue to be counted as 0.5 of a student for the purposes of calculating Average Daily Enrolment (ADE).



Allocation Method

- Funding for boards will be allocated in two stages.

Stage 1: Prior to site selection, board planning allocations have been based on 15% of JK/SK enrolment rounded for a class size of 26, funded at a per-pupil benchmark of \$3,828 for public English Boards and \$3,861 for all other boards. Stage 1 will allocate \$135M to boards. Board planning allocations can be found as an appendix to today's B-memorandum. Actual funding will be based on pupils enrolled in 2010-11.

Stage 2: After site selection, boards will be allocated additional funding to recognize those grants that change based on the individual schools chosen and the qualifications and experience of the teachers employed. Stage 2 will allocate a projected \$27M.

- The balance of the government's Year 1 investment in the Early Learning Program will be used for other supports, such as stabilizing the child-care sector, fee subsidies, and provincial contributions to the Teachers' Pension Plan for additional teachers.

Boards with JK/SK Programs

- In Year 1, boards will be expected to open new full-day JK/SK classrooms.
- Boards that are currently offering full-day JK/SK programs in some of their schools are expected to introduce the Early Learning Program in their other schools.
- Boards that currently offer full-day JK/SK programs in all their schools, such as French-language school boards, will be provided with a proportional share of the new funding.
 - However, these boards will need to develop a plan, in collaboration with the Ministry, for using these funds to support students.

Capital Funding

- In Year 1, school boards are expected to identify those sites where the new program can be introduced without new construction or renovation.
- Boards will also be asked to identify priorities for Year 2 implementation. Some boards may require capital funding support for these sites.
- The Ministry will initiate a capital planning process with all boards in 2010 to identify the capital requirements to support the implementation of the new program.

Transportation

- The Ministry will review the transportation cost requirements for Year 1, beginning in February or March 2010.
- To support the transportation needs for Year 1, school boards are asked to advise their transportation consortia of the proposed sites, once selected, as well as the JK/SK registered enrolment.
- The Ministry will review business cases from consortia for additional buses that may be required to support the Year 1 sites. Priority will be given to consortia with a “high” efficiency rating for routing as established through the Efficiency and Effectiveness (E&E) reviews.
- School bus transportation will continue to support the core program delivered during the instructional day.

Planning and Allocation of Places

- School boards are asked to develop implementation plans for both Year 1 and Year 2 of the Early Learning Program.
- As detailed in Appendix 1 of today's B-memorandum, each board has been assigned a planning allocation of pupil places for Year 1.
- The allocations for Year 1 are subject to review and Ministry approval of board implementation plans.
- To assist boards in preparing these Year 1 plans, the Ministry has developed a planning template. This form, entitled *Early Learning – Phase 1 School Selection*, is available and is also attached to today's B-memorandum.
- School boards must submit the completed template to the Ministry of Education by November 30, 2009. The Ministry will review the implementation plans in consultation with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and notify boards of the final number of approved spaces as early as possible, concluding by January 15, 2010.

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Coordinated Planning

- Coterminous boards are expected to consult and to plan together regarding site selection.
- To ensure boards benefit from municipal expertise in managing and delivering child-care services, boards are also expected to collaborate with municipalities and their local Best Start Networks.
- The Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services will work to support this collaborative approach.

School Selection Criteria

- Boards are encouraged to select elementary schools where the Early Learning Program can be implemented in all JK/SK classrooms. This “full school” approach will allow for optimal support for the extended-day aspects of the program.
- Boards will be asked to consider the following parameters in selecting sites:
 - Availability of space,
 - Impact on local child care,
 - Community factors,
 - Student achievement levels and how these factor into board implementation plans,
 - Role of the school in the board’s capital plans, and
 - No full-time JK/SK currently offered at the school.

Suggested Next Steps for Boards

- Assign a senior official to be responsible for co-ordinating the board's implementation of the Early Learning Program, who will work with the Ministry's regional office early learning education officers.
- Participate in upcoming regional meetings that will be organized by Ministry staff.
- Begin consulting with municipalities (Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, District Social Services Administration Boards), and their local Best Start Networks. Submit the completed site selection template to the Ministry of Education by November 30th.
- Once sites are confirmed by the Ministry (mid-January), begin student registration for Early Learning Program sites for September 2010.
- It is recommended that boards begin to develop a communications plan for January 2010 to inform parents, the child care sector and the broader community of their plans for implementation of Year 1.