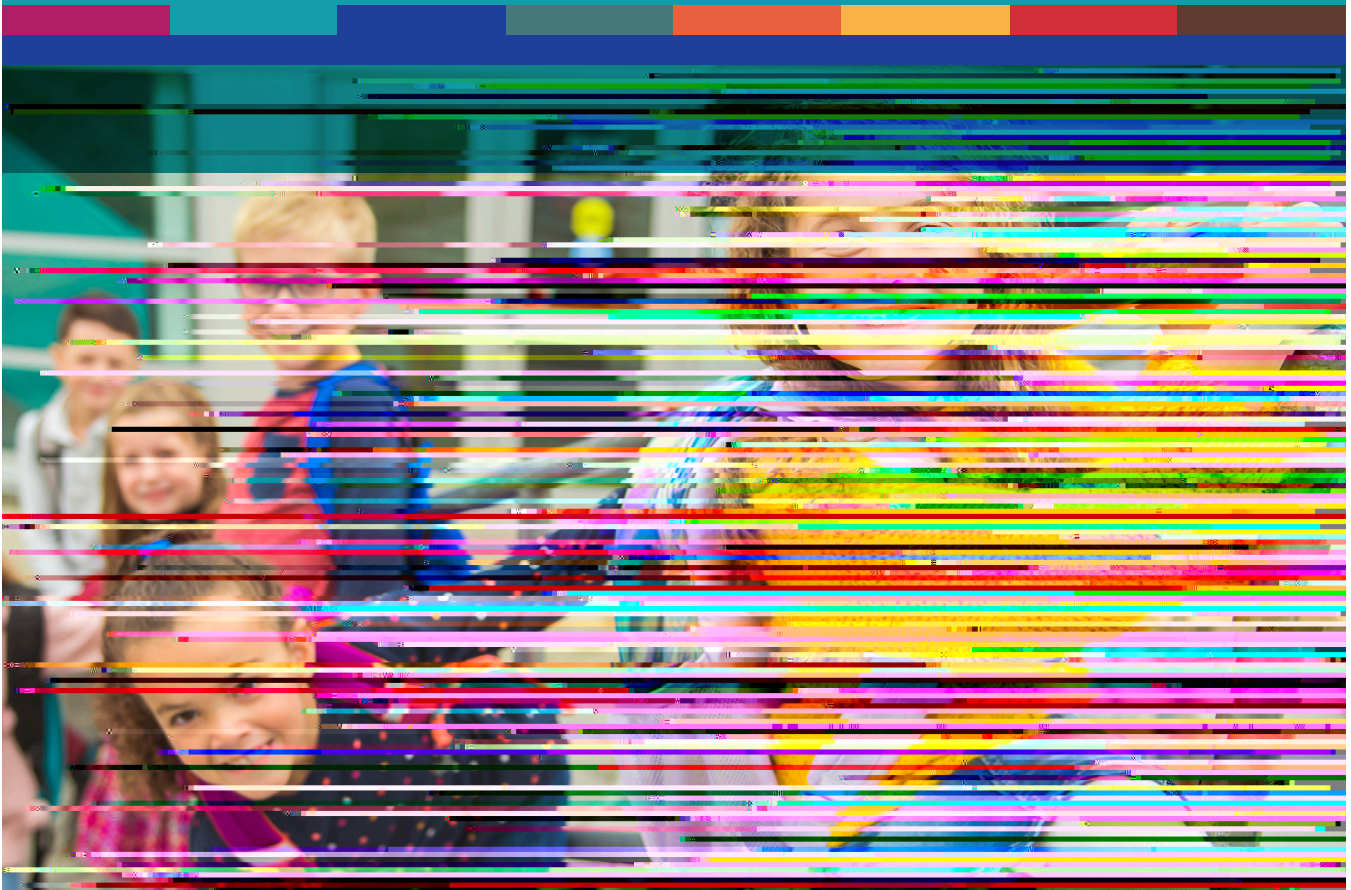


HOW B.C. CAN CREATE THE
NEXT 10,000 NEW CHILD CARE SPACES

A SHIFT TO SCHOOL-BASED DELIVERY OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE



Exploring an integrated approach to Early Childhood
Education and care using the Seamless Day Model

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INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SYSTEM

This B.C. government has made significant strides in delivering more affordable and accessible child care spaces over the past three years. Since announcing plans to develop a universal child care system in 2018, the government has opened more than 10,000 new child care spaces in communities across the province, implemented measures to reduce child care fees, increased wages of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), and founded \$10 a Day prototype sites to explore how a universal system could operate.

However, despite these achievements, fees remain high for many B.C. families, long child care waitlists persist across the province, and the number of available spaces remains low.

The current fractured system is failing children and families

As outlined in the \$10 a Day plan, a made-in-B.C. universal early care and learning system is built on well established evidence that:

- Public spending on the early years is a wise social and economic investment;
- Quality child care is early learning;
- High quality, early years programs promote healthy development;
- Children and families need, and have a right to, quality early care and learning; and
- Sound public policy builds universal systems that meet the diverse needs of today's families.

Why early learning matters

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In the last decade the value of investing in children has gained considerable support.⁶ Reports such as *The Early Years Study* (McCain and Mustard, 1999) have played a key role in changing the dialogue in Canada surrounding child care and learning, and have proven that care and education are not separate concepts in their value to children's well-being and development.

The benefits of quality, well-designed ECEC programs are well documented (Pascal, 2009 and Honorable Margaret Norrie McCain, 2020.) As summarized in the 2017 *Early Care Report*, these benefits include providing kids with enhanced academic and socio-emotional competencies that contribute to increased earnings and better health and social behaviour as adults.



⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/33852192.pdf>

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) *Starting Strong V Report* (OECD, 2017) confirms that the transition from early childhood education to public school is a big step for children. Further investments in high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and smooth transitions between the various stages of early education are key for children's long-term learning and development.⁷ For most children in B.C., school-based kindergarten is currently the only place where ECEC and education overlap.

In recent years, Canada's largest investment in ECEC has been in full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds⁸. Several provinces, including Ontario and more recently Nova Scotia, have also expanded their public school systems to include access for four-year-olds. In Ontario they have designed this to be an additional year of kindergarten (junior kindergarten, commonly called JK), and in Nova Scotia they

Moving towards an integrated system

Learning and care divided *Learning and care* *Learning and care*

A major barrier to building an integrated ECEC system in B.C. is the current division between education and child care. As described in *Integrating Child Care and Early*

Recent international trends show that an increasing number of countries with split systems are moving towards integrated ECEC settings regarding curricula and/or governing authority. This integration is associated with better ECEC quality, and can help enhance universal entitlement, provide more affordable access, recruit and retain better qualified staff, and aid in learner success by facilitating smoother transitions (OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*).

Three Ministries in B.C.

Currently, responsibility for B.C.'s early childhood education and care is split among three Ministries:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD): Child care policy and funding programs, including child care subsidies; operating funding; major and minor capital funding; the ECE Registry; and Indigenous child and family supports.
- Ministry of Health (HLTH): Child care licensing, with monitoring carried out through local health authorities.
- Ministry of Education (EDUC): Kindergarten, StrongStart BC Early Learning Programs and the Ready, Set Learn initiative.

Research shows that countries with successful early care and learning systems house responsibility for both child care and education under one government branch.¹³

The research on this topic overwhelmingly supports this conclusion and the B.C. government should follow the recommendation of the Coalition of Childcare Advocates and Early Childhood Educators of BC and as outlined in the \$10 a Day plan to move the Child Care Branch and Minister of State for Child Care from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education. Over

time other child care functions such as licensing, which are currently housed in other ministries, would also make the move to the Ministry of Education.

As outlined in

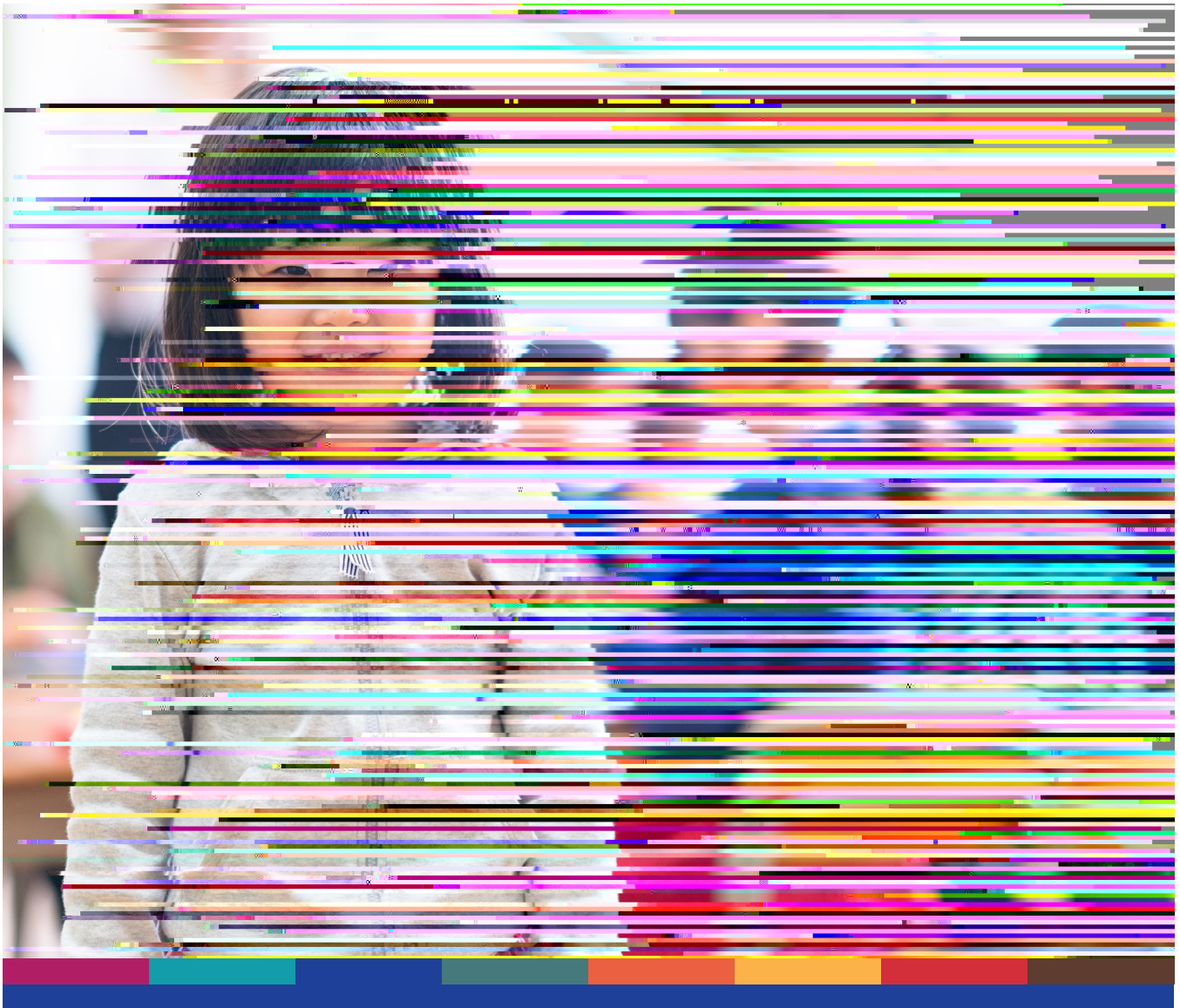
Lessons learned delivering school-age child care

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A fully integrated public early care and learning system in B.C. would address both early childhood education needs as well as provide child care for school-age children. Expanding the seamless day model for our youngest learners is a key first step in realizing this system. But work must also be undertaken to provide child care for students up to 12 years old within the system. While the arguments for school-age care provided by the existing public school system may be slightly different than those for younger children, they are not less valid and there is a great deal of overlap in the key benefits for each age group.

The final report of the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Commission (Flanagan, Beach 2016) outlined a number of reasons why school boards should assume

To realize all of these benefits to their full potential, school districts would need to hold the licence and directly operate the child care program. Administrative efficiencies, seamless communication and control over flexibility, quality assurances, and staffing qualifications would be limited if school boards contracted with a third-party operator to deliver this service.





MAKING THE SEAMLESS DAY A REALITY

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Outline of the Seamless Day Model

The seamless day is an extension of the traditional school day to allow for child care needs in a way that integrates the care model with classroom learning. It is delivered by an educator team consisting of a qualified teacher (or teachers) and an early child care educator (ECE) or ECEs who all share responsibility for planning and program delivery. It is meant to be seamless in terms of learning and programming, and not just logistically seamless through use of common facilities.

The model, typically used with learners in kindergarten and grades one and two, allows our youngest learners to arrive at their local public school for before-school care, where they would be greeted by an ECE. Before-school care takes place in the school classroom where the majority of the children will spend their day. When the bell rings for the school day to begin, the classroom teacher joins the ECE and students in the classroom for the school portion of the day. The ECE would remain in the classroom providing care and educational leadership in partnership with the teacher, based on the teacher's educational knowledge and training.

A second ECE joins the class just before lunch allowing for overlap and prep time, and is organized to enable the morning ECE to conclude their day during the lunch break. The afternoon ECE continues to provide supporting care and leadership in the classroom alongside the teacher until the formal school day is completed, and the after-school care program begins. The second ECE stays with the students and delivers after-school care until the completion of the after-school care hours.¹⁴



¹⁴ This schedule is for meant for consideration as a potential model, exact hours for extended day programs would be determined by school districts. This is the schedule currently being used in the Seamless Day Pilot Project in Oliver, B.C. Oliver is a smaller city with less commuting concerns, the extended day model in other parts of B.C. (for example the Lower Mainland) would need to take commuting concerns into consideration when deciding on extended day operating hours.

This model for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has some key benefits for children, parents, workers, and communities, and is superior to other forms of child care where integration only includes shared space for a number of reasons.

Benefits of the Seamless Day

The concept and importance of linking ECEC to public education is not a new idea, having been first introduced in the *Early Years 2* study in 2007 (McCain et al). The notion was further outlined in detail in

Implementing the seamless day is an important starting point for the alignment of early years learning (child care) and public education. As described in the \$10 a Day plan, the eventual goal for a universal child care system in B.C. would be for school boards to govern a system of early care and learning and for child care to be integrated within the existing public-school system. Implementing the seamless day throughout B.C. would take us one step closer to realizing this for B.C. children and families.

Potential Challenges and Barriers

Achieving a universal public system of integrated early care and learning is certainly not without its challenges beyond simply funding such a system. However, many of the non-financial challenges can be overcome and will themselves help alleviate costs. In fact, the B.C. government has already started to make several of the changes necessary for this vision to be realized.

With the February 26 government announcement of changes to the School Act¹⁵ allowing School Boards to hold the licence and directly operate school-aged child care, the government has opened the door for inclusion of child care in the public education system. This joint announcement between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Family and Childhood Development demonstrates the government's

Once passed, these changes allow school boards to be the owners and operators of school-aged child care, and provide a path for high quality before- and after-school programs to be delivered by school board employees at an affordable cost, with oversight from the school board at the most convenient location for parents.

While existing kindergarten and other classrooms meet the School Act's regulations, which apply during the school day, they may not meet the different regulations that exist for licensed child care centres.

Effectively, this incongruity means that the same classroom that meets all regulations and licensing requirements for students between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., does not meet those same requirements before and after those times for the very same group of students.

The justification for distinct rules applied to licensed child care spaces that differ from

While this data may have changed as it has been some years since this survey, this effectively demonstrates that public school support staff already contain a reservoir of existing ECE talent and expertise that can be tapped to ensure smooth implementation of ECE programs within the public-school system.


ECE positions in the seamless day model would offer full-time job opportunities to EAs who desire this employment with options to work as ECEs on a full-time basis,

Funding

Affordability is a key piece of building a successful early care and learning system. An expansion of the seamless day model into all schools would have two components: the regular school day and an extended day program.

The extended day program would be optional for families, and would operate as a fee-based program. Rates would be set by school boards with transparency and accountability measures in place.

When beginning to integrate child care and education, the level and type of funding will shape the key elements of the program, including quality, accessibility, equity, human resources and physical environments. (dc0l envirces keasdvel and2012). Cons, cLang (en-USID 848 BDC 487.2



DEMONSTRATED POTENTIAL
OR RE-INVENTING THE WHEEL:
EXAMPLES WHERE UNIVERSAL
CHILD CARE AND
THE SEAMLESS DAY ARE
**MAKING A DIFFERENCE
FOR FAMILIES**

This section focuses on three case studies that highlight how universal entitlement and school board involvement have helped to bring positive change to ECEC. The first example presents the way in which child care and education are delivered in Norway, where universal entitlement exists alongside a successful integrated ECEC model. Closer to home, two examples are presented from local school boards who are directly operating the seamless day model in kindergarten classrooms – one longstanding program from the Waterloo Region District School Board (Ontario) and one newer program from School District 53 in Oliver, B.C.

Kindergartens in Norway

The Nordic countries are considered leaders in ECEC, and among those, Norway is recognized as having a particularly effective model. A number of lessons can be drawn from Norway's impressive system which features universal access, an integrated education and care model, and a strong governance system. Norway has been

Waterloo Region District School Board (Ontario)

In 2010, full day kindergarten became universally available to all four- and five-year-olds in Ontario. This was one of the most significant expansions of publicly delivered ECEC in Canada in recent years. Today, Ontario offers a two-year, full-day, non-mandatory kindergarten.

The program operates from 7 a.m. until the arrival bell, and from the dismissal bell until 6 p.m. Full days of programming are offered during staggered entry for kindergarten, and designated Pro D Days. Extended Day programs also operate at alternate program locations for March and Winter break.²³

Children can attend all five days of the week, before or after school, or any combination therein. Registration takes place online through a central system (OneList) for the district, and scheduling changes can be arranged through that system as well.

The seamless day model, delivered directly by a school board, shows how this program can eliminate transitions for young students, and provide universal access of affordable high quality before-and-after school care for families.

²³ <http://www.wrdsb.ca/beforeafter/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2018-Parent-Handbook.pdf>

²⁴ Our knowledge of this pilot project comes from interviews with the two CUPE members who are working as ECEs in this program. We want to note that currently there are two teachers who split the teaching time in the kindergarten classroom participating in the seamless day pilot project. One teacher teaches Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and the other teacher teaches Thursday and Friday. Both teachers and both ECEs work collaboratively to plan and deliver content to students.

Seamless Day Pilot Project School District 53 (Oliver, B.C.)

Beginning in September 2019, School District 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) implemented a Seamless Day Pilot Project in a kindergarten classroom in Oliver, B.C. The pilot program is based on the seamless day model in Ontario, and is delivered in a kindergarten classroom by a teaching team that consists of one teacher and two ECEs.²⁴

Both ECEs working in the pilot program have their ECE certificate, and an extensive background working in the ECEC field.

Currently, entry to the seamless day program is done by need on a first-come, first-served basis with priority being given to kindergarten students and those who need full-time care. Beyond that, access was offered to grade 10 45m is done by nsiblg g

RECOMMENDATIONS

Begin the process of integrating early learning and care by moving the Child Care Branch and Minister of State for Child Care into the Ministry of Education.

Undertake action to limit the ability of school districts to contract out child care services to third-party operators; and/or cap the number of contract spaces per district.

Mandate that school districts become owner/operators of in-house before- and after-school care, focusing on an integrated model and working towards a seamless day model.

Expand the current School District 53 seamless day pilot project in Oliver, B.C. to kindergarten classrooms in school districts across B.C. with dedicated funding.

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