

December 2009

What is full-day learning?

Ontario's full-day learning program gives parents the option of enrolling their four and five-year old children in school for a full-day of learning.

What will my child learn and do while in the full-day early learning program?

Full-day learning for four and five-year-olds will better prepare them for school and for life. It will provide them with opportunities to socialize with their peers and develop the academic and social skills necessary for school, including laying the foundation for each child's reading, writing and math skills. Through instruction and play-based learning, children will develop their capacity in language and mathematics, build a strong foundation for future learning, engage in healthy physical activities and the arts, and develop socially and emotionally through interaction with their peers and the adults who teach and guide them.

Who will be teaching my children?

Certified teachers and registered Early Childhood Educators will work together to help young students learn and grow during the regular school day. These educators will complement each other's skill sets and create a learning environment able to adapt to the unique needs of each child. With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, more students will get one-on-one attention and opportunities to learn together in small groups.

Why full-day learning? Isn't a half-day enough for young children?

Many four and five-year-olds already spend long days in a mix of child care and kindergarten. Providing children with a stronger start on their learning will improve their reading, writing, and math skills, provide a smoother transition to grade 1 and help more students graduate. Success in school matters: it's how we build a well-educated workforce and a key component to building a stronger economy.

Is full-day early learning mandatory for four and five-year-olds?

No. The early learning program, like kindergarten, will remain optional for four and five-year-olds. In Ontario, children are required to attend school once they turn six years old. Although kindergarten is voluntary, 90 percent of eligible children are enrolled.

When will the program begin?

The program will be phased in over several years starting in September 2010. In the first year, it will be available for up to 35,000 students and by 2015-16 up to 240,000 students will benefit from full-day learning.

Who can enroll in the full-day early learning program?

Children who will be four or five-years-old by the end of the calendar year in which they are enrolling – and who live within the boundaries of a school which offers the program – can enroll in the full-day early learning program.

Will full-day learning include before and after school programs?

A number of schools offering full-day learning will also provide before and after school programs delivered by Early Childhood Educators. For example, parents can choose to enroll their children from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. There will be a reasonable fee for these programs, but subsidies will be available for some families, based on financial need.

Does my child have to attend the extended day program?

No. The extended day program is optional. Full-day learning for four and five-year-olds also provides an opportunity to create a comprehensive service system for younger children and their families.

How can I enroll my child in the full-day early learning program?

Early in 2010, your local school board will announce which schools will begin offering full-day learning. If your school is listed, you will be able to register your children in the full-day learning program (starting September 2010) through the school's registration process. Most schools hold registration days early in the new year for children enrolling in September.

Which schools will be selected for the program?

Schools in Niagara that will begin offering full-day early learning in September 2010 will be announced early in 2010, in time for parents to register their children in the new program.

School boards, with input from municipalities, will recommend schools based on the following guidelines:

- Available space - the program can be introduced at a school that has classroom space available and does not require new additions or renovations.
- Impact on existing local child care - school boards and municipalities will work together to assess whether communities will be best served by selecting schools with existing child care programs, schools near licensed child care or schools in neighbourhoods where no child care is currently available for four and five-year-olds.
- Local need - school boards have been encouraged to consider the various needs of all communities that they serve and how the program could meet those needs. Some schools selected to offer the program in the first year will be those located in low-income neighbourhoods.

How will I know if my school is selected?

The schools selected for the first phase of implementation will be made public early in 2010 so that parents can make plans accordingly. The list of selected schools will be posted on the Ministry of Education's website and promoted by your local school board.

If I currently have a four or five-year-old in child care and I choose not to put them in a new full-day early learning program, will I still be able to access child care for my child?

Yes. Parents will continue to make the choices they have always made about their child care arrangements. Licensed child care centres, home child care and after school recreation programs will continue to be available. Child care operators make decisions about their programs, including length of the program and ages served, based in large part on community and parental need. This will not change when full-day early learning is introduced for four and five-year-olds.

What is the affect of full-day learning on the child care system?

The impact of full-day learning on child care and early years programs will vary among communities. The Ontario government will work collaboratively with school boards, child care operators, municipalities and other partners in communities across Ontario to enhance and stabilize existing child care programs.

For more information, contact Kathryn O'Hagan Todd, Director, Children's Services, Niagara Region, 905-984-6900 ext. 3802.