



ALIGNMENT & EXPANSION

A Report on the Current State of
Early Learning and Child Care
in Ontario Schools



Building Blocks for Child Care

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Service System Managers are key players in the organization, planning and delivery of child care in Ontario and we are very grateful to them for their participation in this project.

Susan Colley,

CEO of Building Blocks for Child Care and main author of this study.
October, 2023.





Executive Summary

In 2022, the majority of Ontario’s child care centres (54%) were in public schools, far ahead of any other province. Six out of ten of these centres in public schools are before-and-after-school programs exclusively serving children of kindergarten and school age. This is not a surprise because schools in Ontario are mandated to provide before-and-after-school child care wherever it is feasible to meet the demand for it. But about four out of ten of the child care centres in Ontario schools include younger children as well.

Virtually all of these child care centres are operated by not-for-profit third-party providers. There are also a small number of child care services that are directly operated by school boards.

This study has two main purposes:

- The first is to examine the extent of alignment between schools and early learning and child care (ELCC) programs in Ontario – to judge whether child care merely cohabits with school classrooms or whether it has successfully been integrated.
- The second is to ascertain, in a province moving towards universal affordable child care, what are the opportunities for expansion of child care services in schools and what are the key barriers that should be addressed.

Alignment Issues

Amongst school board directors, there was nearly a consensus that the alignment between school boards and early learning and child care centres has significantly improved over the years. However, child care, either at school age or for younger children, is not yet accepted as part of the core mission of schools.

School boards that directly operate before-and-after-school programs were very conscious about issues of alignment. Direct operation of child care can provide seamless transitions throughout the school day. The children are with the same educators and staff do not need to be hired to do split shifts. Instead, as one board emphasized, it is “shared space, shared mandate and shared efforts”.

We heard that shared space is the most difficult issue. Kindergarten teachers, in many cases, view the classroom as “theirs” and resented having to share the space with child care programs outside of school hours. It can also make it difficult for the teachers to stay behind to prepare lessons for the next day and/or hold meetings with parents. Equally, child care staff may be upset when the school organizes to change their classrooms two, three, or four times a year in order to relieve the kindergarten teachers from enduring a full year of sharing.

On the other hand, we heard that some school boards have worked very hard to minimize conflicts over space and scheduling.

We heard about the key role that principals play and that generally there are good communications and relationships with school principals. When the school principal invests time in the relationship and demonstrates interest in child care, the environment in the school can be very healthy. In general, communication and having clear policies and procedures for sharing school resources is essential. In many schools, the child care experience with shared facilities is very positive.



Staffing challenges are a significant issue in many child care centres in schools; it is a struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff due to wage disparities and differences in working conditions compared to school boards. Potential solutions include wage parity, premium rates for split shifts, and enhanced support for staff working with children with exceptionalities.

Francophone school boards have some added difficulties recruiting staff with French as a first language. We heard that since the pandemic, some programs are in critical condition, with staff shortages and employee burnout a systemic problem.

Service System Managers focused on funding as the problem that underlies staffing issues. The lack of adequate funding presents a substantial obstacle for early childhood education programs implemented within educational institutions.

Proposed **Ministry of Education remedies** to remaining issues of alignment include:

01. ○ Ministry leadership and policy to reinforce the importance and centrality of lifelong learning from birth to Grade 12 in the schools.
02. ○ Public relations campaign to reinforce these messages
03. ○ Hold open-house sessions for the community, feature articles in media – both written and visual promoting kindergarten and child care.

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04. ○ Ministry to mandate the necessary protocols to reinforce the broad policy of “supporting access and seamless experiences for all Ontario families by a system of early learning and child care that is fully integrated with publicly funded schools.

- manuals, meetings and annual education sessions for all senior staff in schools

05. ○ Ensure that extra space in schools is designated for child care

06. ○ Eliminate lease arrangements and bring child care centres under the same measures as the school system.

School Board Remedies include:

01. ○ Systematizing the importance of mechanisms to align school and child care cultures.

02. ○ All school boards should introduce the following mandatory systems and protocols:

- Procedural manual promoting relationships with child



care and Before and After School Programs (BASPs) in every school

- Instituting practices whereby all senior school staff meet regularly (at least annually) to review alignment of procedures between child care centres and schools
- Holding educational workshops among senior staff (including principals) at the beginning of every school year to ensure that protocols and procedures are well understood.
- Institutionalizing regular (at least quarterly) meetings between Early Childhood Leads (and/or superintendents) and local service system managers.
- Offering joint professional development opportunities for school and child care staff

Expansion Issues

School board directors were asked about the process for expansion of child care services in their schools. All the directors supported the need for more child care in the schools (“it makes the most sense”) but articulated barriers that prevented expansion becoming an easy reality:

01.



There isn't usually enough space in existing buildings and it would take new construction to enable this.

02.



Capital funding is not readily available and is determined by Ministry priorities for schools overall.

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03. ○ Many of the projects that have been approved by the Ministry have now been stalled as a result of inflationary cost increases that, so far, the Ministry has not approved.
04. ○ There is a huge problem of workforce shortages in early learning and child care programs (including the before-and-after-school child care workforce), making expanded child care infeasible.
05. ○ Viability for child care is lacking in some areas – particularly rural and remote areas.

In line with findings from B2C2's 2022 report [How to Remove Barriers to Child Care Expansion](#), staffing, funding, and space are considered to be major barriers in expanding child care within schools. While some schools have adequate space to host child care spaces - particularly in more northern or rural areas - they are unable to take advantage of it if there are no child care workers available to operate these services.

The amount of additional child care expansion needed will be very substantial. Since the convenient location of child care services for many parents will be in schools, schools will have to do their share of the expansion. The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario has forecast a need for additional child care spaces in Ontario that goes well beyond the Ministry of Education's current plans. In fact, at \$10 a day, the FAO indicates that 227,146 additional spaces may be needed.

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In order to continue the interrupted process of expanding child care in schools, the Ministry of Education needs to increase capital funding amounts for approved projects in line with actual costs. In order to increase expansion in line with the FAO estimates, the Ontario Government needs to at minimum announce a new \$1 billion capital fund for child care in schools as soon as possible.





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Introduction

Schools and child care services in Ontario have an intriguing symbiotic relationship. Child care services are often the child's first introduction to a school, but they are governed by volunteers, fee-based and play-based. Child care starts earlier than school, ends later, and continues even when teaching stops for professional development days, summer and other holidays. Child care has early childhood educators; school has certified teachers, but twinned with early childhood educators in junior and senior kindergarten.

Many child care centres are in schools – both for younger children and for children of kindergarten and school age – in fact the majority of Ontario's over 5,500 child care centres are in public schools.

In 2022, 54% of Ontario's child care centres were in public schools, far ahead of any other province. Virtually all of these are operated by not-for-profit third-party providers. There are also a small number of child care services that are directly operated by school boards.





Nearly 60% of these centres in public schools are before-and-after-school programs (BASPs) exclusively serving children of kindergarten and school age. This is not a surprise because schools in Ontario are mandated to provide before-and-after-school child care wherever it is feasible to meet the demand for it. But about 40% of the child care centres in Ontario schools include younger children as well. There are licensed spaces for about 50,000 infants, toddlers and preschoolers in Ontario schools. There are licensed spaces for over 250,000 children of kindergarten and school ages in schools. Since 2012–13, the number of child care centres located in publicly funded schools has increased by 23.7% (Ministry of Education, Government of Ontario, 2022).

Yet, these child care centres in schools do not run the railroad, so to speak. Child care may be perceived as an interloper in the school, a square peg in a round hole. Or child care may be welcomed as part of an integrated educational experience from very young, through kindergarten and Grade 1 to the end of primary school.

There is a long history in Ontario of promoting the integration

of child care and kindergarten in schools. The Toronto District Board of Education first hired a Child Care Coordinator back in 1974. From 1974 to 1987 Julie Mathien held that position and championed the development of child care services in schools. The Toronto Board of Education was the leader in Ontario of the initiative to develop child care centres in schools and was the first school board in the country to open a child care centre on school property as well as the first board to open a centre for teen mums. Fortuitously for child care expansion, school enrollments were falling in the early 1970s, perhaps for the first time in the province. There was surplus space in schools so no rental fees were charged.



As Julie Mathien reminded us when we interviewed her: “By 1987, there were close to 100 programs in schools in Toronto (out of about 300 elementary schools in the City) and the Borough of York had its own directly operated before-and-after-school programs.” In 1987 child care in schools received a big boost when the Ontario Speech from the Throne declared that the province would build a new child care centre in every new school. After that, every school board in the province that got a new or replacement school had to acquaint themselves with child care and its special circumstances in the context of the school. This initiative continued until 1995. From early days, there was a close association between child care and mainstream classrooms and they did a lot of professional development together.

A central event in the development of the relationship between child care and schools was the group of Toronto First Duty¹ pilots that were carried out from 2002-2006 (Corter, Janmohamed and Pelletier, 2012).

1

19th century British social reformer John Ruskin wrote that the “...first duty of a state is to see that every child born therein shall be well-housed, clothed, fed and educated till it attain years of discretion.” The First Duty project joined two initiatives – one from Metro Council and one from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

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At five sites in the Toronto District School Board, schools piloted attempts to become hubs to provide seamless integration of child care and two years of kindergarten together with parent support, health and other services for young children and their families.

The First Duty pilots led directly to the consideration of building an integrated early years system in Ontario. In 2007, Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed the late Charles Pascal as his Special Advisor on Early Learning. In June 2009, Pascal released *Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Pascal described his recommendations this way: "... full-day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds in the broader context of moving further on Ontario's Best Start goals for a seamless and integrated system to support children from 0 to 12 years old and their families."

We now have full-day junior and senior kindergarten in Ontario. In the large majority of kindergarten classrooms across the province, there is one early childhood educator and one certified teacher. And schools are now mandated to provide before-and-after-school programs for children unless this is infeasible. Further, the child care and kindergarten curricula have been fully aligned.

In sum, there have been many moves in Ontario to bring child care and school together. This report seeks to assess the current state – the success and the challenges – of this project of collaboration and integration.

At least in theory, the Ontario Ministry of Education strongly promotes the integration of child care and school. Their annual report says "The Ministry of Education provides policy and program direction and financial support to district school boards, school authorities, schools and agencies." And a few sentences later: "The Ministry is also committed to a child care and early years system that gives children the support, care, and development they need to sustain a full continuum of learning – from their earliest years and through to their

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elementary, secondary and post-secondary education.” (Ministry of Education, Government of Ontario, 2022).

In the Action Plan that is part of its Canada-Ontario Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, Ontario writes “The Ontario government currently focuses its child care capital investments in schools, which assists children and families to seamlessly transition between child care and the school system. School-based child care capital investments support children age 0 to 4 in purpose-built child care rooms. School-based child care for children age 4 to 12 typically takes place using shared classroom space before and after the regular school day.”

The Action Plan talks about Ontario’s “vision to transform schools into integrated service hubs and provide a seamless learning experience for children with extended day programs in schools.” (Government of Canada, 2022). Further, the Action Plan reminds us that “Ontario school boards are required to provide before- and after- school programs in each elementary school in Ontario for students in kindergarten to grade 6, where there is sufficient demand and viability.”



Objectives

In light of this vision of integrated services, this B2C2 Study has two main purposes:

- The first is to examine the extent of alignment between schools and early learning and child care (ELCC) programs in Ontario – to judge whether child care merely cohabits with school classrooms or whether it has successfully been integrated.
- The second is to ascertain, in a province moving towards universal affordable child care, what are the opportunities for expansion of child care services in schools and what are the key barriers that should be addressed.

We wish to make recommendations to the Ministry of Education about improving the alignment between school boards and the ELCC sector in order to:

01. ○ Improve the functioning of both school and ELCC programs
02. ○ Find opportunities for expansion of early learning and child care in schools
03. ○ Enhance the transition between child care and kindergarten for students

Objectives

04. ○ ———— |
Recommend workable solutions for cohesion between staff in ELCC and staff in kindergarten programs.

05. ○ ———— |
Advance the reality of continuous learning from birth to age 8.



Methods

The study had seven components:

- 01.** ○ — Collect data on the size and numbers of child care centres (including before-and-after-school child care programs) located in schools as well as the ages of children served.
- 02.** ○ — Telephone survey with Directors of Education (or their designates) in Ontario school boards.
- 03.** ○ — Online survey sent to all school boards that didn't participate in telephone interviews (made available in English and French).
- 04.** ○ — Three focus groups in English with key players - school principals, representatives from municipal Service System Managers (known as CMSMs and/or DSSABs), and child care directors/operators of programs in schools.
- 05.** ○ — A separate francophone focus group with representatives from school boards, child care centres and CMSMs/DSSABs.



06. ○

Key informant interviews :

- Sylvie Charron, Agente de liaison à l'association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario.
- Julie Mathien, the first child care coordinator at the City of Toronto (in 1974).

07. ○

Literature review

The first element, collecting quantitative data on the school boards and their child care centres, was completed through an extensive review of each school board's online reports as well as verifying numbers with each school board during their completion of the survey.

The second element was a 45-minute interview administered to individual participants over the telephone (see Appendix C for text of questions). With informed verbal consent, participants were asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the current status of child care services within their local Board of Education. The survey included specific questions on the size and numbers of child care centres located in schools as well as the ages of children served, along with information on any plans for future expansion. The survey used Likert-scale, Yes/No, and open-ended questions for qualitative review of issues.

The interview questionnaire was pilot-tested with former members of Ontario school boards. Participants were sent the questions beforehand if requested.

In response to difficulties arranging surveys over the phone, the

survey was adapted (third element) to a fillable online survey using Survey Monkey.

Our team reached out to 72 school board directors and/or their executive assistants of all of the Ontario school boards. We interviewed individuals representing 15 school boards and received completed surveys from another 17 school boards (11 English and 6 French). The participants occupied a number of roles from superintendent to manager of planning, to early learning lead.

For the focus groups, participants were selected from diverse regions of the province, as much as possible. The focus groups conducted in English included 5-10 participants each in three separate groups of:

- CMSM/DSSAB (i.e., municipal) representatives
- Directors of ELCC programs in schools
- School principals

In consultation with the Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (Aféseo), the School Board Study Group decided to conduct a francophone focus group with a mix of school board officials, child care operators, and municipal representatives. French surveys were also distributed via the Survey Monkey platform to all of the Francophone school boards. Questions for the focus groups were influenced by responses to the findings from the individual telephone/online surveys.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of the participants, many of whom are listed in Appendix A.

Background & Context

The Ontario Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for child care and early childhood education in Ontario. The Ministry licenses and inspects child care centres for compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and its regulations.

There are three main types of child care in Ontario:

01. Public child care. Child care centres operated by municipalities, school boards, community colleges and public universities.

02. Non-Profit child care. 75% of child care centres serving children from age 0-12 are operated by non-profit corporations, often governed by parent boards.

03. For-profit child care centres are operated for profit by owners of centres.

Child care facilities are located in a variety of locations across the province including government buildings, such as schools and community centres, churches and some purpose-built community buildings. As of March 31, 2022, there were 5,545 licensed child care centres in Ontario of which 2,996 centres (54%) - 9 more centres than the previous year - were located in publicly funded schools.²

² Ontario Ministry of Education, Early Years and Child Care Annual Report 2022. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-early-years-and-child-care-annual-report-2022#section-6>

Despite concern about space continuing to be available in schools for child care programs, it should be noted that most elementary schools have child care centres. As of March 2022, 71% (2,800) of elementary schools have a licensed child care, and 9% (82) of secondary schools have a licensed child care³.

Policy on BASPs Schools in Ontario have the option to deliver their own publicly funded before/after school child care programs or they can arrange a contract with either non-profit or for-profit licensed third-party child care providers. Agreements with alternative authorized recreation programs can also be made.

School boards that offer directly-operated BASP child care programs include: the City of Toronto, Waterloo, Ottawa and Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario (CSPGNO). For example, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) offers two fee-based Before and After School Programs: Extended Day for children in Grades JK - Grade 2 and Youth Development programs for children in Grades 3 - 6. The Waterloo Catholic District School Board also offers directly operated programs. The Waterloo Catholic Board states that "Having an educator from the school day provides a seamless, consistent, and secure experience for both parents and children."

³ See <https://www.ontario.ca/page/before-and-after-school-programs-what-parents-and-providers-need-know>



Administration of ELCC in Ontario

School Boards in Ontario

There are a total of 72 school boards in Ontario – English and French, public and Catholic. There are:

- 31 English Public
- 4 French Public
- 29 English Catholic
- 8 French Catholic

Despite the name, Catholic school boards are also public, rather than private, and all of these school boards are responsible for policy relating to schools that are public, not private.

Service System Managers

Ontario is unique amongst provinces and territories in having municipal responsibility for administration of most policy and funding in relation to child care services. There are 47 municipalities (cities and regional municipalities) that are Service System Managers for early learning and child care services. These Service System Managers are also known as Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) .


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Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan

In 2021, the Government of Canada announced its willingness to become a permanent major funder of early learning and child care services. This was a dramatic change for child care services that had for some time been funded primarily by provincial and territorial governments. Canada signed agreements with 12 provinces and territories – called Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreements – committing itself to transfers of \$30 billion over five years to build a universal system of \$10 a day early learning and child care services accessible to all children 0-5 years across Canada. Quebec, which already has a universal child care system at less than \$10 a day did receive financial assistance but did not have to commit to an Action Plan detailing planned child care reforms.

All the agreements confirmed a plan to reduce parent fees for full day child care services down to an average of \$10 per day by the end of fiscal year 2025-26. By July 2023, a number of provinces and territories outside Quebec already have child care available at \$10 a day. This includes Newfoundland & Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. British Columbia (the home of the \$10 a day demand) has increased the number of its child care centres that offer care at \$10 a day. PEI has announced that parent fees for child care will fall to \$10/day early in 2024.





In addition, specific details were included in these agreements about child care expansion, support for the workforce, provision of high-quality and inclusive services, and serving children with special needs.

The Canada-Ontario agreement (Government of Canada, 2022) echoes all these other agreements in stating that the parties “will work together to build a community-based system of quality, licensed early learning and child care, aiming for all families to have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.” Four main objectives are detailed in Section 1 of the Canada-Ontario agreement. The second of these is “creating more high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces, predominately through not-for-profit licensed child care providers...” The agreement makes clear that “publicly-delivered child care” and home child care are also part of the not-for-profit child care sector. As of November 1, 2022, 92% of licensed programs in Ontario had opted-in to the CWELCC system.

Each agreement contained an Action Plan describing the implementation process for the following two years. It is this agreement and its Action Plan that underpins this study of Expansion in Ontario Schools and how the relationships, protocols and procedures can be aligned to make expansion in the schools a more viable option.

The Ontario Action Plan contained few details on how expansion of not-for-profit and public provision would be implemented. Ontario’s Action Plan forecasted an additional 71,000 (although the Ontario agreement talks about 86,000 new spaces, 15,000 of them were already built and licensed before the agreement was signed) child care spaces over the 5-year period from March 2021 to March 2026 - a growth rate of 3.8% per year. In Ontario, the rate of expansion forecasted is scarcely any larger than the rate for the last five years - whether for-profit or non-profit.

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Ontario's Action Plan (Government of Canada, 2022) did not specify where the expansion of spaces would occur, how the spaces would be built nor how expansion would be accelerated to meet the actual demand. Forecasts for child care demand at \$10 a day (average) suggest that 227,146 additional spaces may be needed.⁴ It has been estimated that the number of child care spaces in Ontario will need to double over time.

Even though the bulk of the child care expansion is supposed to be in the not-for-profit sector, the agreements are largely silent about how this will be supported and encouraged. This is true for Ontario's current limited expansion plans, let alone the much larger anticipated demand recognized by the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario. The sector is already keenly aware of many of the structural barriers to expansion, in particular:

- Extreme shortages of qualified educators
- Inadequate access to capital financing for not-for-profit and public services
- Shortages of identified physical locations for expansion
- Lack of clarity on what processes will be established for planning and approval of expansion
- Lack of a Ministry funding formula and therefore lack of a guarantee of future revenues to cover costs of child care expansion.

⁴ The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) has assessed the federal and provincial funding allocations and found that the allocation of funds will be sufficient to reach the 2025-26 goal of \$10-a-day child care for the 357,111 existing spaces. However, future demand has been underestimated. With the FAO's estimated demand of 602,257 spaces in 2026 and Ontario's actual target of 375,111 spaces, this will leave 227,146 children (under 6 years old) without access to \$10-a-day care in 2026 ([Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, 2022](#)).



Capital Priorities Program in Schools

Child care in schools has benefited from a succession of Ministry of Education promises to fund new licensed child care spaces. In 2019, the Ontario government announced that it would invest up to \$1 billion in the creation of up to 30,000 new licensed child care spaces in schools over five years (an average of just over \$33,000 per space). As of the 2022 annual report from the Ministry, nearly 24,000 of these new spaces had already been approved, but not necessarily completed.

Most provinces and territories have full-day kindergarten programs for five-year olds often with before and after school programs in schools. The percent of schools with programs is much higher in Ontario than in other provinces.

As discussed above, the initiative to establish child care centres in schools in Ontario began in Toronto in the 1970's as demand for child care increased across the province and in response to rising levels of employment of women with young children. Several municipalities, such as Toronto, Durham, Ottawa and Hamilton established offices dedicated to child care centre expansion in schools and resourced them with expert staff to assist parents to create the necessary programs.

Current Planned Expansion Developments

In May 2023, the Ministry of Education circulated a memo on expansion confirming each Service System Manager's space allocations under Ontario's CWELCC program. These include 15,342 school-based spaces (although many of these spaces apparently are duplicates for those already approved under the 30,000 spaces funding program described above). It was assumed that capital funding for

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the additional spaces would be derived from the Ministry's Capital Priorities Program of child care in schools.

Many school boards have received approvals from the Ministry but not all projects are moving ahead because of revised cost escalations that have not been approved by the Ministry. Although this is a trend across the province, Toronto has experienced the greatest number of barriers.

The Ministry approved 28 new child care projects on Toronto District School Board (TDSB) sites across the City of Toronto in 2017. In 2020, the TDSB pledged additional funding toward the construction of 17 of the 28 new child care centers. Yet, significant delays by the Ministry in giving the Board Approval to Proceed (ATP) in these 17 cases has left them unable to proceed without significant additional funding from the Ministry. The 17 approved child care centres to be developed within schools were projected to create over 1000 child care spaces in priority and underserved neighbourhoods, areas with the highest demand for subsidized child care. In late August, the Ministry agreed to a further increase but limited it to 25% increase on their initial allocations. The funding allocated by the Ministry falls significantly short, covering only slightly over half of the total current estimated cost.

Even with this funding boost, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) said it would still need up to \$100 million for its nearly 30 projects. And, the board will still be short \$43 million for these 17 priority projects after a funding boost from the province and the board's own contribution of \$14 million from the proceeds of disposition. This mirrors the situation in many other school boards across the province.⁵

⁵ See full report in an article by Sneh Duggal in *The Trillium*, November 28, 2023



What We Learned

What We Learned About Child Care in Schools in Ontario

Very broadly, this study has two main topics of interest: alignment and expansion. First, we are interested in the degree of alignment between school policy and practices and the child care centres in schools. Further, we are interested in problems, issues and barriers making this alignment difficult. Second, we would like to know about the attitudes to and barriers to the expansion of child care in schools.

It is challenging but necessary to summarize what we heard across all these sources of information, across this range of interviewees and focus group participants who are shaping child care experiences in schools in Ontario. For the most part, the picture that emerged was a coherent one, so it would be very repetitive to outline opinions and remarks for each group one by one.

Instead, this report will summarize what we heard under a range of topics, sometimes identifying the group making a particular point, sometimes not (especially when points were made widely across groups). And, throughout, we will provide edited quotes from individuals, so you can hear the voices as we heard them. At the end, we will distill recommendations for the way forward.

The current degree of alignment



Amongst school board directors, there was nearly a consensus that the alignment between school boards and early learning and child care centres has significantly improved over the years.

As one regional school board representative said: “It is through strong leadership, purposeful partnerships, open communication and collaboration among all partners that a working climate is established that meets the individual and collective needs of all concerned. Although there are always challenges with sharing space, particularly classrooms, this working climate allows everyone to problem-solve the issues that come with shared space in a collaborative manner thus meeting the Early Years Strategy vision of ‘each child being at the centre of responsive decision-making’.




Participants identified several reasons for the progress

- Strong leadership
- Purposeful partnerships
- Open communication and collaboration among all partners
- Clear protocols and operating procedures



Most interviewees from school boards spoke highly of the benefits, finding that on-site child care either ‘significantly’ or ‘very significantly’ improves the learning experience for children in later grades.

One participant described it as “the best of both worlds” to combine pedagogy and child development as a whole. Another participant emphasized the way early learning provides “opportunities for children and families to get exposure to the school setting and the



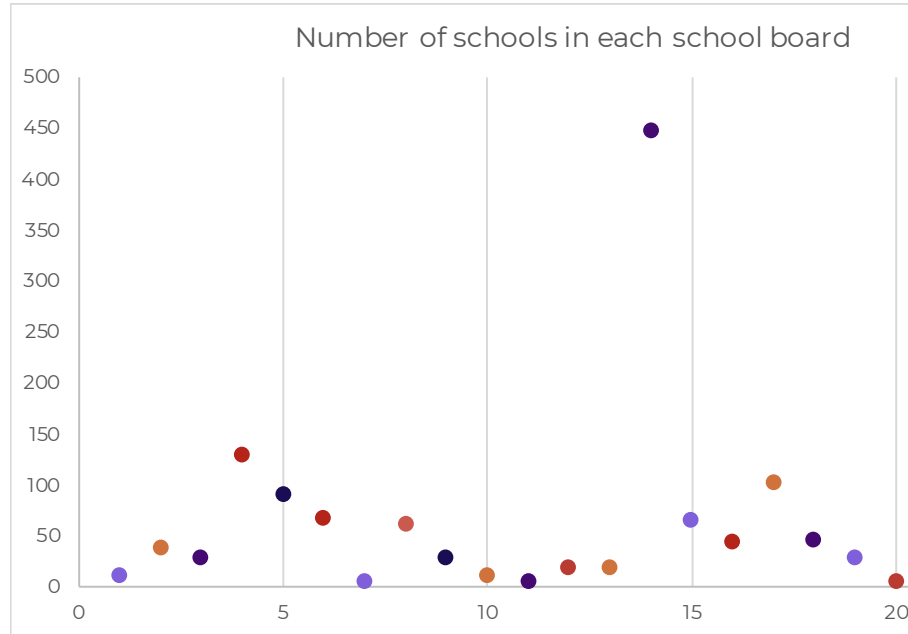
school system”. They further explained how school staff and ECEs can connect about children’s behaviors which allows them to be proactive in assessing and providing early intervention for children who may struggle with learning challenges. Typically, school board representatives who had worked as Early Years Leads or in some form of Early Learning role had a deeper appreciation for the way that it can improve later years experiences.

Francophone school boards have a long history of hosting child care in the schools. However, in the francophone and other focus groups, we were reminded that, despite these considerable improvements, it is still the underlying reality that both child care centres and before and after school programs (BASPs) are second-class citizens in the schools. Child care, either at school age or for younger children, is not yet accepted as part of the core mission of schools; it is still an extra, although much more welcomed than it once was.

In particular, school boards that directly operate BASP programs were very conscious about issues of alignment. One of these school boards thought that the structure was very beneficial as it provided seamless transitions throughout the core day. The children were in constant touch with the same educators that they could trust. Because the programs are directly operated, they don’t have to hire staff for split shifts. Instead, staff shifts run from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Another of these school boards emphasized that the philosophy was rooted in the concepts of “shared space, shared mandate and shared efforts”.

Not only were these school boards proud of their “seamless” day programs but they experienced fewer challenges with staffing (although still some challenges), had more collaboration between all staff, and, because the BASP programs operate as an extension of the school day, they are able to communicate with all staff and parents regarding any issues with the children. Another benefit identified was that it was easier to recruit and retain ECEs because they were hired by the school board, received higher wages and benefits and did not have a split shift.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL BOARDS WE HEARD FROM



The majority of respondents believed that introducing child care into the schools had been a very positive experience. As one school board representative said: “Very successful, without a doubt!” At the same time, “still work to do” was a sentiment shared by all accompanied by a strong recognition that practices and relationships have improved dramatically over the years.

The opinions of child care operators largely mirrored the perceptions and observations of the school board directors. There was an acknowledgment of the evolution of partnerships over time. While the initial stages were marked by skepticism and misunderstandings, relationships have improved significantly. Open communication, regular meetings, and mutual understanding have contributed to the growth of positive partnerships.

Voices We Heard

Plusieurs services doivent se débattent continuellement pour le partage des locaux et milieu commun; par contre les enfants font partis de la même communauté.

Several services continually struggle with shared premises and utilizing the common areas. Everyone should recognize that the children served (whether in child care or the school) are part of the same community.

In the Service System Manager focus group, participants expressed a desire for a legislative framework that recognizes early childhood education as an important component of education in the schools, ensuring consistent funding and support from an early age. As a means of achieving both growth and quality, a long-term vision for integrating early childhood education into the overall educational system is essential.

At the same time, Service System Managers emphasized the importance of involving both parents and the community. It is important to involve parents in learning about the challenges and benefits of early childhood education programs. Advocating for policy changes and increased funding requires parental awareness and support.

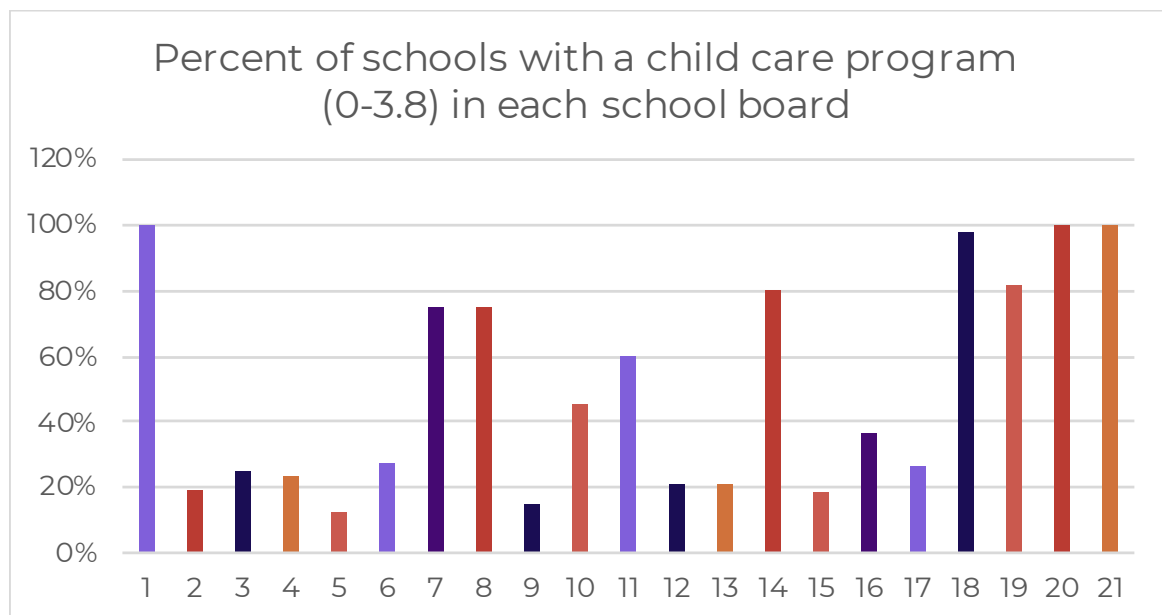
Collaboration with various stakeholders has emerged as a key strategy for addressing challenges related to space, funding, and program quality. Engaging with community partners needs to be emphasized as a means of leveraging resources and supporting program expansion.


Space and Scheduling Issues

Although child care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers requires its own dedicated space when located in a school, before-and-after-school child care for children in kindergarten and grade school is different. Generally, before-and-after-school care is located in shared space – usually in a classroom that will soon, or has just, welcomed children for the regular school day (about 9 a.m. to 3:00 or 3:30 p.m.).

The possibilities for conflict are obvious, and sometimes the conflicts are actual and problematic.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL BOARDS WE HEARD FROM





In school board interviews and in focus groups, we heard that shared space is the most difficult issue. Kindergarten teachers, in many cases, viewed the classroom as “theirs” and resented having to share the space with child care programs outside of school hours. It can also make it difficult for the teachers to stay behind to prepare lessons for the next day and/or hold meetings with parents. Proprietary feelings about materials, supplies and equipment also manifested themselves in teachers, and child care staff, withdrawing materials and equipment rather than working out arrangements to share these items and work out a reasonable issue for replacement or dealing with breakage. Child care staff dislike it when the school organizes to change their classrooms two, three, or four times a year in order to relieve the kindergarten teachers from enduring a full year of sharing.

On the other hand, we heard that some school boards have worked very hard to minimize conflicts over space and scheduling:

Our board has really worked hard to set the tone for what is expected in terms of partnership in early years. And really there’s a bit of setting the expectation, but there’s also setting the foundation as well. There’s a lot of resources that are put into this support at the local level, but also professional learning that we have done in the past directly with the city for child care. So we would host a lot of joint sessions with the city about working in schools in general, but shared space being a really big topic that comes up. In the past we’ve hosted the school age conference with our partners at the City, George Brown and Toronto Catholic. So, we’ve put in a lot of resources to kind of pre-empt this and to really support people with developing those joint working norms and

What We Learned

Voices We Heard

I know storage is an issue, especially at some of our smaller schools where they don't have storage enough for themselves, and the programs have to bring in a large number of supplies. So storage can be an issue. I would hope that we're trying to rectify that as we build new, bigger, better centers.

thinking about what collaboration looks like, whether that be supporting with the child care sector; and also internally in setting the tone for leadership and what principals can do or administrators can do to support the situation, to set the tone for their school and really just figuring out how to work in these newer partnerships. Shared space is not new, but for some individuals it is new every year.

There was an emphasis in some school boards on making sure that all problems and issues were immediately acted on and brought to a positive conclusion. Combined with a very positive attitude and board staff dedicated to ensuring smooth relationships and operations, the York Catholic District School Board, like with many other school boards, has produced a comprehensive handbook: Child Care In Schools Operator's Handbook. This handbook is used frequently; it is taken to principals' meetings and used as a foundation to produce the "seamless day". Several school boards now have manuals or operational guides. Recording the policies, protocols and decisions has an important impact on the smooth functioning of child care in the schools.

In the child care operators' focus group, participants highlighted the importance of setting clear expectations and boundaries when sharing space. The need for effective communication between child care providers and school staff is emphasized to prevent

misunderstandings and ensure smooth operations. Creating a distinct identity for child care programs within the school setting is identified as essential to maintain their unique character.

Another potential problem arises because child care operates every weekday, not just days and months when schools are open. And child care centres are open early and late. It can be difficult for the school to adjust to these different hours in the day, staffing for Professional Development days and school holidays.

In school board interviews, respondents noted that this was rarely an issue any more. Most school boards have worked on this issue over

the years and have prepared procedural documents and guides that are shared at the beginning of the year to allow all staff to plan ahead. It was noted that rural communities have an additional layer of challenge with this because of the need to coordinate busing, school closures and the difficulties of retaining custodial staff for all the open hours needed by child care and BASP programs.

Some school boards identified a few problems with janitorial staff along with hiccups when there was no janitor on site, but they all thought that these problems had improved considerably over the years. Most schools have instituted clear procedures regarding “opening and closing” hours so that everyone is clear about expectations. A remaining difficulty is figuring out when and how to get repair and maintenance work done on school premises because child care is there almost every day.

Child care operators agree that there are challenges related to space allocation, scheduling, and logistics. On the other hand, there are

Voices We Heard

“[The Kindergarten and Before and After School Program] is a single program with a single pedagogical and curriculum approach, planned and delivered by qualified educators using common space and resources.”

Pascal, 2009; quoted in Ministry of Education (2019-20)

Voices We Heard

“Develop a handbook as a guide to support all staff focused on the relationship between child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and schools.”

Recommendation provided in Ministry of Education (2019-20)

strategies that have been employed to navigate these challenges, including the development of comprehensive agreements and using shared spaces creatively. Flexibility and adaptability are key. Resource sharing and access to school facilities can benefit both parties. However, concerns about balancing the needs of the school and child care programs arise, especially during renovations or conflicting schedules.

When there is a shared staff room, there can be issues; sometimes child care staff do not feel welcome. Some respondents agreed that this was a problem although they weren't sure why that was the case. Usually, however, the child care staff had their own staff rooms and preferred to use them rather than use the teachers' staff rooms. One school board had heard that the child care centres “said that the situation in the school felt like a big divide” but

they try to do everything to improve the relationships and that things have definitely improved in recent years.

Similarly, there can be conflict over playground use, about access to parking, and about storage. One school board interviewee was concerned about the lack of space in new building for playgrounds and pointed out that Boards plan for 500 school pupils per acre but that there was no accommodation for the additional (for example) 88 child care spaces. Parking spaces can create conflicts. Typically, as schools expand and go through retrofits/renovations, parking is not accounted for. There are schools where some staff will show up one hour early just to get a parking space. This can sometimes cause tension. Storage is another big issue as there is never enough room for storage and this is intensified when classroom sharing takes place.

Most child care in schools is operated by what are called third-party operators, rather than by the school board. School board policies across the province insist that access to the space used for child care should be paid for by these third-party operators. In some cases, like the City of Toronto, the City has negotiated rates with school boards and the City pays these rental fees. In many other school boards, the child care centres have to pay these occupancy costs.

There is no uniformity in policy across the province as to what rent should be charged to operators. Some school boards charge little and some charge a lot. As participants in the child care operators' focus group noted, there have recently been rental increases proposed by school boards. Participants expressed concerns about school boards attempting to offset their deficits by imposing significant rental hikes on child care providers. Such actions are viewed as counterproductive to the goals of collaboration and equitable access to quality child care.



Service System Managers highlighted different space challenges faced in rural communities. Rural communities face unique challenges, including limited available spaces and difficulties accommodating growth. Modular construction and collaborations with organizations like churches are considered strategies to address space constraints.

Finding suitable spaces for child care programs within schools can be a problem everywhere. Repurposing existing facilities requires consideration of infrastructure requirements, such as play areas and restroom facilities. Lack of appropriate facilities hinders program expansion and limits the accessibility of early childhood education.

Voices We Heard

I always suggest that coming into a new school year that child care and kindergarten and principal meet together in August, and it's really important to talk about how we are living together in the same space during the school year. And I think when we come together, it starts everything off in a good way because everybody then can voice what's important in a learning environment for each and how are we going to work within that space.

The Role of Principals, Policies and Procedures, and Communication

School boards with a long history of hosting child care and before-and-after-school (BASP) programs in their schools recognized that having a committed, energetic, qualified and knowledgeable early learning manager is important.

In the francophone focus group, we heard that generally there are good communications and relationships with school principals. When the school principal invests time in the relationship and demonstrates interest in child care, the environment in the school can be very healthy. It is equally important for the child care director to establish a good rapport with the principal.

Further, we heard how important it is to have a positive relationship between teachers in the school and early childhood educators. This can support children's learning, but is not always the case.

Other school boards identified the "separate" entity issue as a barrier to sharing information and therefore being able to discuss individual children. One school board interviewed had, however, introduced a special consent form at the beginning of each year so that this did not become a problem.

Voices We Heard

We do have a resource, it's called Building Partnerships. So, when I worked in child care, I was part of the community committee that developed this with principals and a few other child care operators, home and EarlyOn providers, where we developed a resource to support school based and child care in understanding the roles and the relationship coming together. And one of the things I like in the resource is it gives monthly prompts of topics to talk about. So action items for a principal and action items for child care. So, an example would be to come together in September after your August meeting to talk about what the PA days are, getting child care information in School newsletters, so that families in the school know what's happening in child care and that they also know that there's child care there as well. And then being included in that school life but also for child care to connect with school. We have our child care open house, we have a parent gardening night who wants to join to have that relationship and open for the school community. That's the way to grow those. It just makes it easier.

What We Learned

One respondent captured the essence of many school boards' experience in the following quote: "We've been at this for a long time and any issues that we've had over the years, we kind of worked them out and we just moved forward."

From the Service System Managers' focus group we heard that collaboration with schools and school boards has historically played a pivotal role in effectively addressing fee policies and rent increases for early childhood programs. School boards often have much greater power than child care operators and have the ability to engage in advocacy efforts to influence decisions on funding and operational conditions.

The Principals' focus group reminded us of the advantages of seamless transitions for children and families through the merging of child care and school programs. The group acknowledged the challenges of resource sharing and space limitations within schools, stressing the importance of fostering collaborative relationships between child care staff and educators. Staffing and resource availability emerged as crucial factors, underlining the need for adequate support in delivering quality child care services. There needs to be consistent messaging for parents and caregivers. And principals need to be involved in the planning and decision-making stages of integrated programs.

The Principals favour expanding child care programs but there are important staffing shortages and financial constraints. One of the biggest challenges mentioned was the lack of support for children with special needs.

The Principals' focus group discussed the feasibility and potential outcomes of extending play-based kindergarten to encompass three-year-old children. The need for suitable staffing, resources, and appropriate space for child care services would be central to a decision like this. There can be significant challenges tied to toileting, transportation, and adapting school environments for younger children.

Voices We Heard

It is equally, I would say, troublesome in both sectors at this point [school and child care], trying to find qualified people to come in and teach or be the ECE in the classroom or do the daycares. But we are at the point where it's even difficult to find unqualified people to come in.

Generally, we have been since the pandemic and right through to now, very limited in the amount of professional learning we can provide because the system is so stressed by the number of positions that need to be filled, and they can't be filled. So, we need to be able to control the one thing we can, right? So, we don't provide professional learning. That creates another gap in our system.

Staff Shortages and Staffing Issues

All school boards indicated that staff shortages are creating problems for the child care and BASP programs and, in some cases, for recruiting Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs) for the kindergarten classrooms. There was also a concern that as the demand for and expansion of the CWELCC \$10 a day programs increases, this would draw off even more staff – especially qualified staff. Some school boards indicated that they have had to close some of their BASP programs due to staffing shortages.

Child care operators in the schools agree. Staffing challenges are a significant issue; it is a struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff due to wage disparities and differences in working conditions compared to school boards. Potential solutions include wage parity, premium rates for split shifts, and enhanced support for staff working with children with exceptionalities.

Francophone school boards have some added difficulties recruiting staff with French as a first

What We Learned

language. We heard that since the pandemic, some programs are in critical condition, with staff shortages and employee burnout a systemic problem. Supervisors sometimes get moved from completing administrative and HR tasks and pedagogical leadership to supporting the program as part of ratio.

Staffing problems are multiplied by the split-shift issue. Generally, early childhood educators who provide before-and-after-school care work before 9 a.m. and again after 3 p.m. This pattern is attractive to some potential employees, but undesirable for many more, making it difficult to recruit qualified staff. Further, managing staff schedules and ensuring consistent program delivery are difficult within split-shift arrangements. There are challenges associated with coordinating personnel, upholding supervision, and ensuring program coherence.

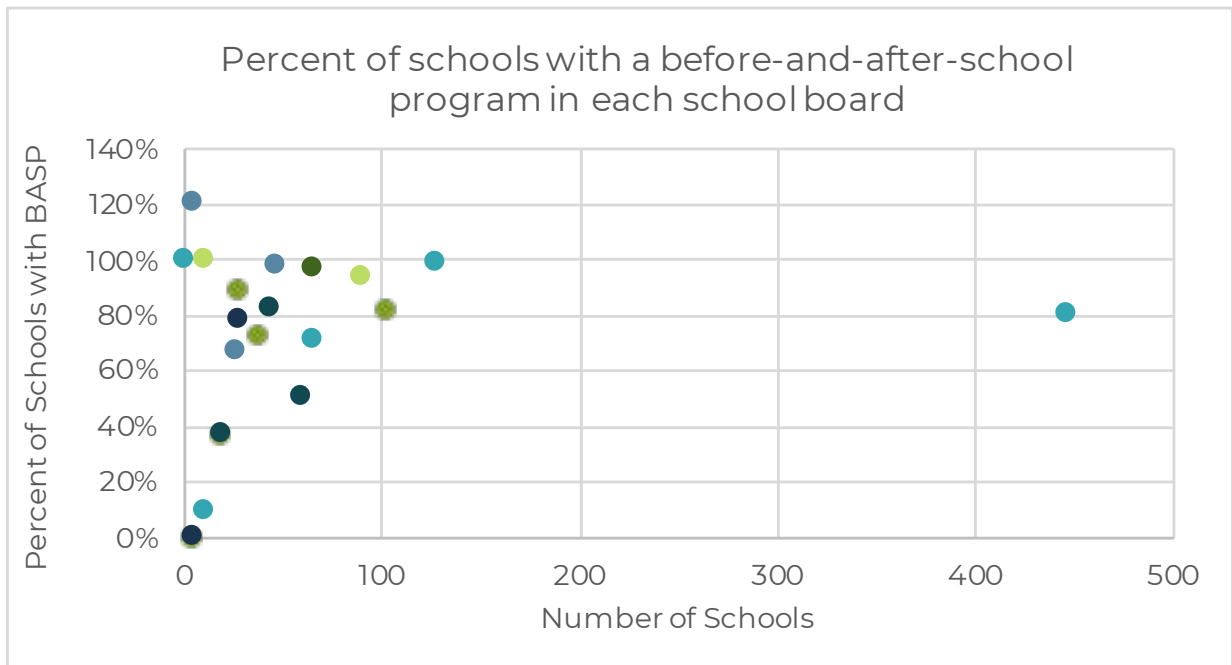
Service System Managers focused on funding as the problem that underlies staffing issues. The lack of adequate funding presents a substantial obstacle for early childhood education programs implemented within educational institutions. Insufficient financial resources have a detrimental impact on the overall quality of programs, the availability of qualified staff, and the long-term viability of operations. The participants underscored the importance of securing sustainable financial backing in order to uphold programs of high quality and to attract educators who possess the necessary qualifications. Insufficient financial resources pose a hindrance to providing competitive remuneration, thereby affecting the retention of personnel and the continuity of programs.

The early childhood education sector is confronted with a widespread problem of staffing shortages, which have significant implications for program quality and continuity. Competitive remuneration is a crucial factor in the recruitment and retention of highly skilled educators, thereby enhancing the overall level of professionalism within the field. In keeping with this, there are potential benefits of mentorship programs and collaborations with educational institutions as a

means to improve professional growth and qualifications.

All school board interviewees talked about the difficulties of hosting joint professional development activities between child care and kindergarten staff. Although desirable, it was pointed out that teachers do their professional development on PA days when BASP and child care programs are needed to offer full-day programs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL BOARDS WE HEARD FROM



Expansion Issues

School board directors were asked about the process for expansion of child care services in their schools. All the directors supported the need for more child care in the schools but articulated barriers that prevented expansion becoming an easy reality:

- There isn't usually enough space in existing buildings and it would take new construction to enable this.
- Capital funding is not readily available and is determined by Ministry priorities for schools overall.
- Many of the projects that have been approved by the Ministry have now been stalled as a result of inflationary cost increases that, so far, the Ministry has not approved.
- There is a huge problem of workforce shortages in early learning and child care programs (including the before-and-after-school child care workforce), making expanded child care infeasible.
- Viability for child care is lacking in some areas – particularly rural and remote areas.

The process for taking up capital expansion opportunities varies:

- Some are initiated by the municipal service system managers and third-party providers and the school board simply respond to act as a partner.
- The planning department of the school board checks for viability. School boards work together with principals while the trustees work out the logistics (leases and fee structures). The child care centres and BASP programs are responsible for operations.



- The Ministry of Education initiates expansion, based on the data the school board collects on the number of children on the wait-lists. The board of trustees works to advocate for expansion to the Ministry.
- The school board takes the lead and works to create connections with operators for the individual schools. Sometimes this is done in conjunction with the Service System Managers. The local school sometimes identifies the need, based on what they hear and observe.
- Sometimes the process is initiated by trustees, validated by the school for interest and then confirmed at the school board level.
- In some other cases, school boards identify an apparent need and demand and then send out surveys to test for viability.


While the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders vary from school board to school board, there was agreement that the collaboration with the local service system managers is of paramount importance. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongest, none of the participants rated this relationship lower than a 4. The number of meetings with Service System Managers ranged from twice a year to weekly, though some school boards that dealt with multiple CMSMs/ DSSABs met with one more than others.

In line with findings from our 2022 report *How to Remove Barriers to Child Care Expansion*, staffing, funding, and space were major barriers in expanding child care within their schools. While some schools have adequate space to host child care spaces - particularly in more northern or rural areas - they are unable to take advantage of it if there are no child care workers available to operate these services.

As a result, participants in the Service System Managers' focus group stressed the importance of government advocacy to address funding inadequacies and staff wages. Raising public awareness and advocating for increased funding are essential steps to improve the

Voices We Heard

We had one that just opened recently.... That one was a little bit more difficult and a little bit more lengthy, but in all fairness, our request for funding didn't match what we wanted to build. And we had gone back to the Ministry to say, you either need to increase our funding or decrease the number of spaces that we had requested. ... Eventually the Ministry came through and they suggested that we reduce the number of spaces. I think it was originally one infant, one toddler, two preschool, and then it ended up being one infant, one toddler, one preschool room. But we were able to proceed. And once we were able to proceed, it's relatively smooth sailing, except if we have to go back to request additional funding. And I think every board has had to do that for every project since COVID just because of the way the economy has been and prices have just skyrocketed. I think sometimes it's timing that is the issue. The Ministry — there's a disconnect between when we send our request for approval and then the timing that the ministry actually approves it. But at the end of the day, we've been fortunate and we've had them all approved. And we've been able to move forward.



early childhood education landscape. Policy changes are needed to prioritize early childhood education and ensure adequate funding for operational sustainability.

The traditional means of funding expansion takes considerable time. So, when funding is approved by the Ministry of Education, school boards are obliged to get Ministry approval for any changes that may occur. In fact, many school boards told us that their projects were held up and could not move forward because costs had risen and they had been unable to get the revised estimates approved by the Ministry. One school board indicated that they had “pulled back” their expectations to the “bare minimum” and it was still not enough for the Ministry to proceed with funding.

There are many approved construction projects on hold due to dramatic cost escalation since COVID. As one school board pointed out “we have a number of construction projects sitting on the books because the notional funding is insufficient to build the required spaces.” This has been intensified by shortages of labour and shortages of materials. This has made it necessary for school boards to try to renegotiate costs with the Ministry of Education. However, as a result, many projects are stalled. Toronto seems to have been hardest hit with 28 projects (2,200 spaces) on hold.

One school board pointed out that funding was limited to projects identified as “school” expansion priorities. If they needed a “stand-alone” project to build an addition to accommodate additional children, there is no avenue to apply for funding for capital if it does not dovetail with school priorities.

One school board pointed out empty schools would be an excellent source of space for child care centres but the Ministry has imposed strict rules around disposition of school assets (known as proceeds of disposition). It is not therefore permissible for school boards to use their proceeds of disposition to fund child care capital and if that was changed, it could make a difference in many places.

What We Learned

Taking out repayable loans is a potential solution to bridge funding gaps and support program expansion, although it has not been a traditional source of funding. Going forward, the financial challenges of expansion are likely to be significant and the use of community reserves and other creative financing options will need to be considered.



As mentioned above, sometimes adequate space to develop centres or retrofit is difficult for school boards/child care operators to obtain. To address space issues, some schools opt for modular construction or portables. But, even places that may have land to develop will face barriers in staffing and funding.

Several participants made specific note of the impacts the COVID pandemic has had on expansion. For example, retired educators who had -prior to COVID - returned as child care providers, were often unable or unwilling to return after the pandemic. In addition, the pandemic created delays and slowdowns in construction but now that projects are able to resume, the costs have increased dramatically, and some school boards have not been able to renegotiate the required costs with the Ministry.

Recommendations

Ministry of Education

01. ○ Ministry leadership and policy is needed to reinforce the importance and centrality of lifelong learning in all its forms from birth to Grade 12 in the schools.
02. ○ Public relations campaign to reinforce these messages
03. ○ Open houses to the community, feature articles in media – both written and visual
04. ○ Ministry to mandate the necessary protocols to reinforce the broad policy of “supporting access and seamless experiences for all Ontario families by a system of early learning and child care that is fully integrated with publicly funded schools.” From Ministry of Education’s 2019-2020 paper, Working Together in a Shared Space.

05.



“Build and foster relationships through:

- Regular opportunities for school and child care staff to collaborate.
- Opportunities for secretarial, custodial and other staff to meet with the child care, EarlyON Child and Family Centre, as well as school staff in an effort to build collective understanding of this shared culture.
- Leadership meetings are regularly scheduled throughout the year to support and nurture this shared culture, and to provide updates that may impact either program.
- Consider sharing invitations to school or child care special events.
- Consider the inclusion of all staff working with individual children in transition meetings for children as appropriate, with parent permission.”

06.



Ensure that extra space in schools is designated for child care and licensed for the provision of child care services

07.



Ministry to encourage school boards to introduce directly operated (i.e., school board operated) before-and-after school programs in order to improve consistency of programming, recruitment of qualified staff and promoting a seamless experience for children.

08. ○ Eliminate lease arrangements and bring child care centres under the same measures as the school system.

09. ○ Provide adequate funding for school-based child care expansion projects that have experienced cost escalation and are not moving forward. Guidelines should enable schools to receive funding approval based on lowest of three bids, not an arbitrary figure/percentage that does not reflect cost escalation realities.

010. ○ In order to increase expansion in line with the FAO estimates of future demand, the Ontario Government needs to at minimum announce a new \$1 billion capital fund for child care in schools as soon as possible.



School Boards

01. ○ Systematize the importance of mechanisms to align school and child care cultures.

02. ○ All school boards should introduce the following mandatory systems and protocols:

- Procedural manual promoting relationships with child care and before-and-after-school programs (BASPs) in every school
- Instituting practices whereby all senior school staff meet regularly (at least annually) to review alignment of procedures between child care centres and schools
- Holding educational workshops between senior staff (including principals) at the beginning of every school year to ensure that protocols and procedures are well understood.
- Institutionalizing regular (at least quarterly) meetings between Early Childhood Leads and/or superintendents with local service system managers.
- Offering joint professional development opportunities for both school and child care staff.

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Appendix A: List of Participants

Our outreach for this study included people from the following groups and organizations (some omitted on request of the participants). Their views are not necessarily representative of the organization listed.

School Boards interviewed

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Durham Catholic District School Board
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
Kenora Catholic District School Board
Limestone District School Board
Near North District School Board
Niagara Catholic District School Board
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board
Simcoe County District School Board
Superior Greenstone District School Board
Toronto District School Board
Upper Grand District School Board
Waterloo Catholic District School Board
York Catholic District School Board

Principals participating in a focus group

Principals from the following schools:
Centennial Hylands Elementary School, Guelph, Ont.
Essex Public School and Hawthorne Alternative School, Toronto, On.
George O'Neil Public School, Nipigon, On
Jean Little Public School, Guelph, On.
Taylor Evans Public School, Guelph, On.

Operators participating in a focus group

City of Toronto

Family Day Care Services, Toronto
Milton Community Resource Centre
Today's Family Early Learning and Child Care, Hamilton, On.
Umbrella Central Day Care Services, Scarborough, On.
YMCA of Eastern Ontario
YWCA, Hamilton

Representatives of Service System Managers in a focus group

City of Greater Sudbury
City of Peterborough
City of Stratford
Oxford County
Regional Municipality of Halton
Regional Municipality of York
United Counties of Prescott-Russell

Francophone representatives in a focus group

Centre de ressources familiales de l'Estrie
Centre pour enfants Timiskaming Child Care
Chapleau Centre De Garde D'enfants, Chapleau, District of Sudbury
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord, North Bay, On.
Conseil scolaire catholique Mon Avenir, Toronto, On.
Corporation des services de garde d'enfants de Nipissing Ouest/
WNCC Corp.
La Boîte à Soleil Co-opérative Inc., Region of Niagara
Nipissing Ouest/WNCC Corp



Appendix B: Literature Review

Research on the issue of alignment between schools and early learning programs does exist but is not extensive. Some of it focuses on preschools/prekindergartens in the U.S who have located in schools. Some of it focuses on the co-ordination between child care or Head Start programs and kindergartens as children transition into school. A number of studies explore the benefits and challenges of viewing pre-kindergarten to Grade 3 (broadly ages 3 to 8) as a distinct stage of development that requires an aligned educational vision and set of experiences. There is also some research that explores the role of principals in facilitating co-ordination.

The research does suggest that it is possible, and perhaps desirable, for ELCC programs and schools to operate with strong alignment in their values, pedagogy, teaching philosophies, and operations. Indeed, in Ontario, the child care curriculum and kindergarten curriculum both emphasize the value of learning through play and are closely aligned.

Alignment presents many potential benefits for both schools, parents, children, and the ELCC programs. Schools that have shared spaces with child care centres have found that the presence of child care centres facilitates recruitment of kindergarten students as the children in the child care centres often later attend the accompanying school ([Wilson, 2008](#); Little et al, 2022).

The familiarity of schools with the children in partnering with child care centres is also shown to improve processes of assigning students to classrooms and planning curricular content progressions once they become school-aged (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005; Little et al., 2022). The children in a school's child care centres are able to gain a strong foundation and are better prepared for future grades and school success.

Location was one of the main deciding factors for parents/guardians choosing an ELCC program ([Statistics Canada, 2019](#)) – families with more than one child of different ages - under 5 and school aged - can benefit from having a single location child care and school. Furthermore, older (school aged) children have benefitted from partaking in caring for, and being around children from 0-5 ([Wilson, 2008](#)).

There are also barriers to achieving alignment between schools and ELCC programs. The first and most frequently cited barrier is the strain on resources and space. Both kindergarten classes and school age classes that share classroom space with child care programs; this puts a strain on the use of the space. Not only does it become a concern for classroom space but the entire schedule often needs to be revised to accommodate use of the gymnasiums, bathrooms, schoolyards, and staff coverage. Child care hours are often longer than school opening hours (e.g., 7am-6pm) and availability on PA days and/or school holidays can be difficult to arrange. This tension can translate into how staff view and treat each other. In some cases, the lack of alignment has left ELCC staff feeling isolated and unaccepted in the workplace which in turn furthers the barrier to alignment ([Wilson, 2008](#); Little et al, 2022; [Shue, Shore & Lambert, 2012](#)).

One common theme in the literature demonstrates the importance that school principals play in the alignment of schools and ELCC programs. Principals have the power to align the two or isolate them from each other ([Wilson, 2008](#); Little et al, 2022; [Shue, Shore & Lambert, 2012](#)). A principal who does not value ELCC programs and/or is not properly trained in integrating child care programs with school activities, will not likely successfully integrate the programs into the school. Lack of alignment on teaching philosophies and insufficient resources are at the heart of the tensions between schools and the child care programs (Sipple & McCabe, 2011; [Wilson, 2008](#); Little et al., 2022). Further understanding of how schools perceive the child care programs and what their own advantages and challenges are is crucial for ensuring positive expansions and bridging a mutually beneficial relationship.

Appendix B: Literature Review

Finally, some researchers believe that locating child care in schools is not desirable. Halpern (2013) argues against viewing pre-kindergarten to Grade 3 as an integrated stage of development. Halpern agrees there are many positive aspects of bringing child care and schools together: “These include an extended time frame for holding on to a developmental orientation; a complex view of the child, and sensitivity to individual differences; the longitudinal perspective on learning and mastery; the balance in attention to teaching and learning; and the broadened time frame for considering the transition to school.”

The problem, Halpern (2013) says, is the power and inflexibility of schools. “The schools (as a whole) have a history of failing to respect the integrity of other institutions that join them in efforts to better meet children’s needs. Thus far, all that has been accomplished by tying ECE more closely to schools is making ECE less early-childhood-like. The needs of schools are just too powerful and end up overwhelming the identity of institutional partners. “

Appendix C: School Board Interview - English

This instrument was adapted for Survey Monkey and for francophone participants. These instruments can be made available on request.



Building Blocks for Childcare (b2c2) Survey: Understanding the Relationship Between Schools and Child Care Centres in Ontario

Building Blocks for Child Care is a charitable organization that helps community groups and not-for-profit organizations to plan and build new early learning and child care centres and redevelop existing facilities. Our objective is to increase the availability of not-for-profit and public child care for families and communities in Ontario.

As you probably know, the Government of Canada is spending \$30 billion over five years to build a universal system of \$10 a day early learning and child care services accessible to all children 0-5 years. It has been estimated that the number of child care spaces in Ontario will need to double over time.

Our Research Objectives

1. To better understand how integration of schools and child care centres is doing, across the province.
2. To gain a deeper understanding of the capacity, or lack of capacity, of Ontario schools to expand the number of child care spaces.



Your Role

Your interview will be conducted over Zoom and should only take 30 minutes. Your survey responses will be kept confidential. The results of this survey will help us understand and plan for future space expansion.

If you would like more information on Building Blocks for Child Care, please visit our website at www.b2c2.ca

We really appreciate your input!

Questions

- 1) The name of my school board is:
 - 2) How many child care programs are located in schools in your school board?
 - 3) Of these centres,
 - a) How many are school board operated?
 - b) How many are operated by another provider?
 - c) How many are operated by municipalities?
 - d) How many are not-for-profit?
 - e) How many are for-profit?
 - 4) Are there some elementary schools in your board without any school-aged, before and after school (BASP), or child care programs? If yes, how many?
 - 5) Are there some schools in your board with programs only for BASP and school-aged children (kindergarten or higher)? If yes, how many?
 - 6) Are there junior high and/or high schools with child care centres located in them? If yes, how many?
-

7) Given the identified need for more child care over the next several years, is your board planning to expand child care provision in the next three years?

a. YES: continue with questions 8-14, then jump to question 16, and on.

b. NO: jump to question 15, and on.



If you answered YES to question 6

8) Is this because the EDU has allocated a specific number of expansion spaces to your school board? If yes, how many?

9) Have you already made decisions about the location and type of program for this expansion of child care facilities?

10) Can you tell us how many new centres have been approved for expansion?

Total number of new centres:

Age Group (years)	Number of Spaces
0-3.8	
3.8-12	
0-12	
Other	



11) How many renovated/retrofitted centres or additions have been approved for expansion?

Total number of renovated/retrofitted centres or additions:

Age Group (years)	Number of Spaces
0-3.8	
3.8-12	
0-12	
Other	

12) Have you had difficulties completing these projects? Please explain.

13) Have these decisions on expansion been made in conjunction with your CMSM/DSSAB(s)?

14) On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high), how would you rank the level of collaboration with your CMSM/DSSAB(s) in this process?



If you answered NO to question 7

15) Can you explain why you are not expanding?

- a) Lack of space
- b) The Ministry of Education did not allocate spaces in your schools
- c) Lack of capital
- d) Other reasons (explain)

-
- 16) Do you meet regularly with your local CMSM/DSSAB(s)? How often?
- 17) From the point of view of your school board policies and activities, how well do you think the provision of child care for children under kindergarten age has improved the learning experience for children in later grades?
- a) Significantly
 - b) Neutral
 - c) No improvement
- 18) Thinking about expansion of child care in Ontario schools, what is the role of:
- a) The local school
 - b) The school board
 - c) The trustees
- Who has the main role for initiating expansion and managing expansion?
- 19) Do kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators in FDK meet with educators from the child care programs located in your schools to discuss the common children, the issues, or activities?
- 20) Does the school board provide joint professional learning opportunities for kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators
- a) In FDK?
 - b) In child care?
 - c) EarlyOn programs located in schools?
- 21) Do you have a board policy that aims for every school to offer child care for children under kindergarten age?
- 22) How much annual rent per square foot do you charge the child care programs?

23) Do you have a board policy for kindergarten classrooms to be used by kindergarten children in extended day child care?

We would now like to understand the challenges related to child care that your school board faces.

24) From the school board point of view, and on a scale of 1 - 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high), how would you rank the following statements?

- a. It is difficult for the school to adjust to child care hours (7am-6pm), PA days and/or school holidays.
- b. Kindergarten teachers find it difficult to share classroom space with child care programs.
- c. there are conflicts with scheduling the use of shared space.
- d. Teachers are accepting of early childhood educators in the staff room.
- e. It is difficult to make space for child care centre playgrounds.
- f. Child care staff are reluctant to mix with teachers and school staff.

25) Are there any other challenges that you have experienced with child care in your board's schools?

26) In conclusion, and from your school board's point of view, do you think that incorporating child care into the schools has been:

- a) Very successful - we have achieved our goals
- b) Moderately successful
- c) Less successful - goals have not been achieved

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to our survey!

If you have any questions, please contact us at suecolley@b2c2.ca



Email :

info@b2c2.ca

Website :

www.b2c2.ca

