

Thursday March 25, 2010

Dear Mr. Boisvert

Over the past few months, I've had the pleasure on a number of occasions to meet with the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers from the schools identified as having the Early Learning Kindergarten Program beginning in September 2010. There is no doubt in my mind as to the professionalism and dedication of these teachers. They have a great number of questions about next year. Some of them are completely invested in the new delivery model for JK/SK and others need more information before committing to it. I believe that when you meet with them, you will find them enthusiastic, very informed and vocal about their hopes and dreams for next year.

A major problem has developed for some of these fine teachers however. The Board's view that the program will be delivered by full time teachers only, troubles a number of the staff in the group. There are people who have chosen to work half time for a variety of reasons who feel that they have a great deal to offer to the program. They cannot understand the Board's reluctance to include them in the program from the very beginning. I would like to outline a number of points that I hope will help you understand how valuable these teachers are to a program in its infancy and how they can help bring it forward as it rolls out over the next five years.

A teacher on a half time contract receives half the pay of full time teacher. However, the commitment I've seen from these teachers leads me to believe that the Board would get a lot of "bang for its buck". Most of them are already making plans for next year and trying to figure out how to implement the program. If the Board has identified problems involved with half time teachers delivering the ELKP, these teachers have probably already considered solutions. They bring a great deal of experience to the classroom and a wide variety of skills and expertise.

The children are the real winners when two teachers share the workload. The "many hands make light work" concept applies here. The strengths of each teacher benefit the students through a very rich program. Discipline problems are lessened. Just imagine how difficult the afternoon might be when the kids and the teacher are exhausted from a rigorous morning. In the half-time scenario, a bright eyed, well rested teacher arrives halfway through the day. The level of enthusiasm and patience is maintained throughout the day. What a great environment for kids. The board maintains that it is better for the students to have fewer adult contacts, but this program demands it. The teachers would argue that having two teacher contacts is actually good for the students. There is a better chance that every student has someone they will connect with.

Speaking of adult contacts, the issue of ECE involvement is a very important piece. The half time teachers already understand the idea of collaboration. They've been doing it for years. The idea of

working closely with another educational professional does not concern them. They understand how to share roles and responsibilities and will probably help many of us see how the relationship with the ECE can be beneficial for everyone.

My hope in writing this letter is that you will consider using teachers who are committed to the program from the outset. There are full time and half time teachers in the schools identified for the Early Learning Kindergarten Program who want to be part of this exciting venture. They have a vast amount of knowledge and experience in their school communities and are the best people to deliver this program. I know that the Board wants the best people to be involved in September and you need look no further than those teachers already working in those JK and SK classes. They are prepared to take on the challenge and work to solve any problem that might arise. As I've said earlier, they've already worked out solutions to problems that others may not have envisioned. They are the experts at what they do and need to be given every opportunity to shine.

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