

Councillor Briefing Sessions



Request for Recommendation

Best Start Update

Presented To:	Priorities Committee
Presented:	Wednesday, Jun 18, 2008
Report Date	Tuesday, May 06, 2008
Type:	Councillor Briefing Sessions

Recommendations

Whereas Best Start is Ontario's plan for integrated early learning and child care services and the City of Greater Sudbury is the lead partner in the local Best Start initiative; and

Whereas, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) has requested a Best Start Integrated Status Update, to describe progress implementing the 2007/08 Best Start Community Plan and to outline next strategies for continuing to implement the plan; and

Whereas the Children Services Section has consulted widely with all Best Start Partners in developing the Best Start Integrated Status Update which will provide direction for 2008-09 and beyond;

Therefore be it resolved that City of Greater Sudbury Council approve the City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Integrated Status Update and direct staff to submit it to MCYS.

Finance Implications

The City receives Best Start funding from MCYS at 100%. Activities proposed in the Status Update will be funded by Best Start funding or as part of the City's regular funding for children's services.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

Kate Barber
Policy & Community Developer Child Care

Digitally Signed Jun 12, 08

Division Review

Ron Henderson
Director of Citizen Services
Digitally Signed Jun 12, 08

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager of Community Development
Digitally Signed Jun 12, 08

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Mark Mieto
Chief Administrative Officer
Digitally Signed Jun 13, 08

Policy Implications

The Best Start Integrated Status Update reports on progress in meeting the goals as set out in the 2007-2008 Best Start Community and Child Care Plans. These reports and the updated strategies in the Best Start Update will provide policy direction for 2008-09 and beyond. Activities proposed in the Plans support the Section's business plan and overall goals.

Background

On November 25, 2004, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services introduced their Best Start initiative which included a \$5 billion commitment over a five-year period starting in 2005-2006. The framework for the Best Start Initiative has been built on the premise that all children and youth should have the opportunity to succeed and families should have access to service regardless of income. According to MCYS, Ontario's Best Start Plan will "provide for the healthy development, early learning and child care of Ontario's children in their first years. Research shows these investments will reap economic and social benefits as children grow up and become happy, healthy and contributing members of society."

MCYS, through the City of Greater Sudbury, has invested in a major expansion of licensed child care and improvements to the child care subsidy system which have made more families eligible for child care subsidy. The City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Network was created, made up of partners from all four school boards and the child care, family support and specialized children services sectors.

Greater Sudbury has been a leader in the Province in moving forward with the Best Start Vision. With leadership of the City, the Best Start Network has led a significant re-organization of the delivery of children's services which has resulted in the opening of Best Start Hubs throughout the City where parents will receive coordinated access to a large range of services. Through collaboration of our many partners, Greater Sudbury was one of the first non-demonstration community in the Province and the first in Northern Ontario to have Best Start Hubs operating in school settings.

MCYS has requested that the Best Start Network submit an update of their progress over 2007-08 in meeting the goals set out in the 2007-08 Best Start Community and Child Care Plans, and an outline of proposed activities for 2008-09. The update is attached and a synopsis is provided below.

Best Start Integrated Status Update- Summary

The Best Start Integrated Status Update has been developed with the ongoing input and participation of all Best Start partners and includes a description of the progress made implementing Best Start as well as an outline of the Best Start Network's next strategies to implement the Best Start vision of an integrated system of early learning and care for all children in Greater Sudbury.

Building a System of Best Start Hubs

Strategies and projected Activities for 2008-2009

-open remaining 3 Hub sites.

- implement a Quality Assurance program in Hubs.
 - implement strategies to assist families with barriers to attending existing hubs.
 - implement a plan for Hubs to reach out to other neighbourhood schools.
 - implement the evaluation plan, which will include indicators to measure parent engagement, service utilization, and level of service integration.
 - work on joint training initiatives that includes education partners.
 - pilot the “Prescription to Read” program in conjunction with the Neo-Natal follow up clinic.
 - review communications strategies among Best Start Network partners.
 - implement the Early Literacy Partners’ work plan.
 - implement a strategy to coordinate and expand early ID and screening activities.
 - review existing supports for women experiencing, or at risk of, Post -Partum Depression.
 - develop strategies for Hubs to assist with improving access to Primary Health Care (for example- focus on immunizations, partnership with new Family Health Teams.)
- Advocate to the Ministry of Education for funding for schools to make space available at no cost to child care centres and Hubs.
- Conduct community wide surveys and consultations to identify parents’ needs and perceptions about child care and early years services.
- Launch the online Centralized Application and Waitlist for child care.
- Create and implement public education campaigns about the value of licensed child care, early learning, early ID, parenting and early childhood professionals.
- Continue to support the development of new infant and toddler child care programs in priority areas.
- Support the development of a new Family Home child care agency.
- Support the development and launch of the Aboriginal Child Care centre.
- Continue to work with Northern Partners to determine the feasibility of a base-funded model.
- Continue to review operating policies and levels of funding for all mandated programs (fee subsidies, family resource, wage subsidies and special needs resources).

Support the development and implementation of a community wide Recruitment/ Retention strategy for Early Childhood Educators.

2008-2009 Community Activities

The City receives Best Start funding from MCYS at 100%. Activities proposed in the Best Start Integrated Status Update that have a financial impact will be funded by Best Start funding or as part of the Children's Service Section's regular funding for child care and related services. Most activities in the plan will move forward as part of the regular business of the Children Services Section. The following Special Initiatives, listed below, are outside of the City's Children Services activities and have been given a specific allocations and timelines. These amounts are available within the Best Start budget, so there will be no budget impact.

Allocation and time-lines for Child Care and Best Start Special Initiatives

Initiative	Allocation for 2008/09
Launch the online Centralized Application and Waitlist for child care.	Up to \$180,000
Implement the Early Literacy Partners' work plan including- piloting the Read to Grow program, distribution of Early Literacy Kits, and enhancing early literacy training opportunities for Francophone early years professionals.	Up to \$100,000
Continue to provide financial support for front line child care educators to participate in Best Start training initiatives.	Up to \$50,000
Develop and implement strategies to assist families with barriers to attending existing hubs.	Up to \$60,000
Create and implement public education campaigns about the value of licensed child care, early learning, early ID, parenting and early childhood professionals.	Up to \$60,000
Support the Best Start Network to coordinate Early Identification and Screening initiatives and expand these to reach more children.	Up to \$20,000
Continue to offer joint training initiatives for all Best Start partners with a focus on including education partners. Develop a mechanism for partners to apply for matching funding for joint training initiatives.	Up to \$15,000
Gain wider parent input through large scale surveys and consultations.	Up to \$5,000
Pilot the "Prescription to Read" program in conjunction with the Neo-Natal follow up clinic at the Children's Treatment Centre.	Up to \$5,000

The City's Best Start partners have been involved in the development of the Best Start Integrated Status Update through consultation with the Best Start Network and its committees and the Early Learning and Child Care Supervisors Network of Greater Sudbury. As the Service System Manager for the City, Children's Services, is well positioned to take on the leadership role in Best Start and to oversee the implementation of community plans to improve the delivery of children's services and enhance children's well being.

Council Approval

Following approval by City Council, the City of Greater Sudbury Best Start Integrated

Status Update will be submitted to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. When approval has been received from MCYS, the Children Services Section and the Best Start Network will move forward to continue to implement the Best Start Vision for Greater Sudbury, as outlined above.