

Expanding Public Education to Include Four-Year-Old Children

Parent Perspectives of the Pre-Primary Program In Nova Scotia



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Nova Scotian parents of young children were asked of their thoughts regarding the effectiveness of the provinces' new publicly-funded, universal, early childhood education, program known as Pre-Primary. MQO Research interviewed over 400 families, ensuring rigorous methodology and participants from different economic, geographic, and educational backgrounds. The findings were remarkably positive.

The majority of parents expressed overwhelming support for the Pre-Primary Program, strongly recommending it to other families. Parents recognized the developmental benefits of the program to their children. Nine-in-ten reported that Pre-Primary contributed positively to their children's overall social growth while six-in-ten said that it better prepared their child for school. Strengthened language skills, improved social skills and overall happiness were noted as dominant benefits. Quality of the teaching and the curriculum, as well as the stability of the program were noted aspects of the program.

Additionally, financial relief for families was a notable advantage, with 62% of parents indicating that Pre-Primary had a positive impact on their family financials (39% indicating a very positive impact). This enthusiasm was especially evident in families with incomes less than \$50K per year, among whom nearly six-in-ten gave the program a perfect 10 / 10 as to whether they would recommend Pre-Primary to another parent.

Results of this research indicate that the economic and familial implications of school-based programming for four-year-olds are exceptionally positive, supporting not just individual family finances but also promoting broader societal benefits by improving parent's opportunity to participate in the workforce sooner, alleviating childcare-stress, and promoting greater home life stability. Socially, the program has facilitated better readiness for formal school and helps ease transitions that are critical in early childhood development.

The research project also revealed some areas for improvement in terms of access to the program. Two percent of participants chose not to enroll their child in the program, noting some logistical challenges, with a few reporting that they felt their child was not yet ready. Despite this, positive impressions of the program were predominant, indicating robust approval of the program's educators, educational approaches, and the overall learning environment, averaging 8.6 out of 10, across all demographic groups, strongly recommending it for other families.

These findings reinforce the critical role of early childhood education in shaping developmental trajectories and alleviating economic and logistical burdens on families.

The results advocate for the continuation of the Pre-Primary Program in Nova Scotia and potential expansion of similar school-based programs in other Atlantic provinces. The substantial advocacy from parents, and the observed benefits, underscore the program as a cornerstone in Nova Scotia's educational landscape, promising significant long-term benefits for both children and families across the province.