



Building a Policy Framework for Middle Childhood: Considerations

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Canadian Policy Research Networks

- Who are we?
- What do we do?
 - Networks: Family, Work, Health, Public Involvement
 - *Research*: Family and Child Well-Being, Labour Market, Citizenship & Civic Engagement, Health Care, Diversity, Cities and Communities, ...
 - *Information Resources*: Diversity Gateway, Job Quality, E-network
 - *Public Affairs and Outreach*

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Overview

- A Few Key Questions
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Poverty: It's a Matter of Will
- Policy Examples
- The Cost of Raising a Child
- Windows of Opportunity



Questions to Consider

- **Audience** – who will use this framework?
- **Goals** – for what purpose will they use it?
- **Outcomes** – What do you hope to achieve by its use?
- **Timelines** – what are the windows of opportunity for meeting your goals?
- **Dissemination** – how will the document be shared with others?
- **Leadership** – what is the role of the Alliance?



Children 6 to 12 experience developmental transitions that are a continuation of critical changes that begin in the early years. These transitions affect a child's ability to be healthy, safe and secure, able to learn, and socially engaged and responsible (Middle Childhood Matters, United Way of the Lower Mainland).

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Policy Considerations

- Who is responsible for the well-being of children in Canada?
 - The family?
 - The state?
 - Society as a whole?
- Should policies be designed to be universal or should they be targeted to specific groups?



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- The UN Convention provides an ideal framework for putting forward policy options for middle childhood
- Specific articles lend support to each area of importance to middle childhood
- The federal government and each province has ratified this international convention and this provides legitimacy to efforts to address the well-being of children



UN Convention: Key Articles

- In the Preamble:
- Convinced that **the family**, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, **should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance** so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community



Article 18: Supporting Parents

- For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render **appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians** in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the **development of institutions, facilities and services** for the care of children.
- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that **children of working parents** have the right to benefit from **child-care services and facilities** for which they are eligible.



Article 19: Safety

- States Parties shall take **all appropriate** legislative, administrative, social and educational **measures** to **protect the child** from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect.
- Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for **the establishment of social programmes** to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child.



Article 24: Health & Nutrition

- States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health
- Furthermore, States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of **adequate nutritious foods** and clean drinking-water



Article 27: Standard of Living

- States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the **child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development**.
- States Parties shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and **support programmes**, particularly with regard to **nutrition, clothing and housing**.



Article 31: Right to Leisure

- States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and **recreational activities** appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall **encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.**



Unicef Child Poverty Report Card 2005

Protecting children from the sharpest edges of poverty during their years of growth and formation is both the mark of a civilized society and a means of addressing some of the evident problems that affect the quality of life in the economically developed nations.

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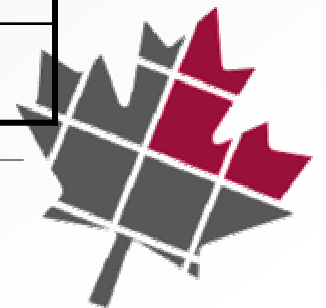
Child Poverty

- Adequate family income is a key determinant of middle childhood well-being
- High levels of child poverty contribute to negative outcomes for children in this age group
- Along with adequate housing, usually determined by family income, adequate income for families with children is the fundamental building block for child health and well-being



Child Poverty: How Does Canada Fare?

Country	% Children Living Below Poverty Line (Unicef, 2005)
Denmark	2.4
Finland*	2.8
Norway	3.4
Sweden	4.2
France	7.5
Australia	14.7
Canada	14.9



Note on Economic Competitiveness

- Finland, with a child poverty rate of 2.8, was named the second most competitive economy in the world this year by the World Economic Forum, based in Switzerland. They ranked 1st last year.
- Canada was ranked 16th in terms of competitiveness this year in the same report.



The Cost of Raising a Child

- A report produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK found that:

Older children cost significantly more than younger ones - as in the case of one parent families, the cost of a child aged 11-18 is about 50% more than that of a child under 11 (in a one child family).



Financial Benefits that Recognize Higher Cost of Older Children

- In Europe, there are five countries that explicitly offer higher cash benefits to families with older children
- Austria: monthly allowance goes up after age 10 and again at 19 years
- Belgium: monthly allowance goes up at age 12 and again at 18
- France: additional allowance for children aged 10-16
- Luxembourg: additional allowance for children aged 6-11 and again after age 12
- Netherlands: benefits go up for children between 12-17



Policy Examples

- The following slides highlight a few international and provincial examples of policies in each field of concern identified for middle childhood
- The fields are:
 - Quality Out of School Time Opportunities
 - Meeting Fundamental Needs
 - Providing Parent Supports
 - Ensuring Safety



Quality Out-of-School Time

Saskatchewan's SchoolPlus strategy:

- This [SchoolPlus model] builds upon the successful practices of schools and community partners to date...It more actively involves family and community members, to help provide all children and young people with the supports they need for healthy development and learning success. These supports may include health, **nutrition, recreation, culture, social** and justice services for children and their families...
- www.schoolplus.gov.sk.ca/pe/main/about

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Quality Out-of-School Time

Quebec child care policy

- Quebec has integrated school-age child care into its overall family policy up to age 12. It is funded under the \$7/day program and the administration falls under the auspices of the Department of Education
- Child care staff are unionized school board employees
- Programs operate from 7am to 6pm daily and usually take place in the school building
- Funding comes primarily from the provincial government and is administered by school boards.



Quality Out-of-School Time

International approaches

- In Europe and other places out-of-school time policies focus on allowing parents to spend more time with their children
- Some examples:
 - Annual vacation leave varying from 4-6 weeks
 - Shorter work weeks and days
 - Meaningful part-time work opportunities



Meeting Fundamental Needs

- Fundamental or basic needs in middle childhood include an adequate family income, and decent housing
- In Europe universal policies are preferred in order to ensure all children are reached
- Some countries stand out as having a particularly strong focus on meeting the fundamental needs of families, i.e. France, Sweden



France

Major financial policies benefiting families

- Family allowance for families with 2 or more children plus:
 - A young child allowance from 5th month of pregnancy to age 3
 - Income-tested supplement
 - Accommodation allowance
 - Single parent allowance
 - Parental education allowance
 - Child care benefit for hiring help
 - Special education allowance
 - Beginning of the school year allowance



Sweden

Financial policies benefiting families with children:

- Monthly allowance payable for every child
- Monthly student grant payable for 9 months of the year for those attending high school
- Additional allowances for families with three or more children
- Means-tested housing allowance based on income and number of children (30% of Swedish families receive this benefit)
- Additional allowance for disabled children



Parent Support

- There is a huge range of policies to support parents
- In addition to financial supports, policies affecting parents include pregnancy related leaves, employment related benefits and policies and child care policies
- Some international examples are drawn from France, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland



Specific Examples of Parent Supports

- The education system in France:
 - Begins with a system of nurseries (crèches) for children under 3, heavily subsidized by the State or parents have the option to stay at home and receive a Child Rearing Allowance or a generous tax benefit to hire a nanny in the home
 - Ecole maternelle is a universally available pre-school system for children aged 3-6 (currently 98% of 3 year olds in France attend full-time)
 - Public education for children 6-18
 - Free post-secondary education



Examples (continued)

Swedish Parental Leaves:

- 390 days of leave at 80% of the parent's income plus 90 days at a flat rate of SEK 60/day
- Parents of low income or no income receive a minimum benefit of SEK 150/day
- Temporary parental benefit (caring for a sick child) available to all parents caring for a child up to age 12 at 120 days per year at 80% of income (average of 7 days per child per year are taken)
- Dad's days provide an additional 10 days paid leave to fathers when a new child is born



Examples (continued)

Work-Family Balance in the Netherlands:

- The approach in the Netherlands has included a focus on the nature of employment for parents by implementing a “combination scenario”
- This policy aims to encourage mothers to work more and fathers less
- The ultimate goal is to allow for part-time work by both parents
- The *Adjustment of Hours Law* (2000) gives Dutch workers the right to request a shortening or lengthening of their normal working hours. As a rule, employers are obliged to grant such a request unless a substantive business reason to refuse it exists. Moreover, employers are generally not allowed to demand to know the reasons behind the request.



Examples (continued)

Finland's Unique Approach:

- While offering many similar policies to their Nordic neighbours, Finland also offers:
 - *All* pupils in comprehensive school, upper secondary school and vocational schools receive a free meal every day. School meals are based on children's nutritional requirements. The meal comprises a main course, salad, bread and a drink. In addition to the main meal, many schools also offer healthy snacks.
 - Parents can take city public transit at no cost when accompanied by a child in a stroller.



Ensuring Safety

- Safety issues for children in middle childhood are often issues of adequate supervision
- Supervision involves not only parents but other adults coming in contact with the child
- Allowing parents more time to be with their children, for example with shorter working hours, permits them to better supervise and keep their children safe
- Ensuring access to regulated, high quality out-of-school activities also contributes to safety
- More adequate supervision by qualified adults in the school yard and lunch room can contribute to a reduction in bullying and injuries



Ensuring Safety: Other Avenues

- Traffic calming, lower speed limits on neighbourhood streets
- Special bicycle lanes and routes
- Affordable public transit with strategic routes and hours suited to children's needs, including rural children
- Mental health programs and services located in the school
- More stringent Internet laws and regulations



Windows of Opportunity

- Appropriate time in the policy cycle
 - i.e. in pre-budget planning or pre-election
- Other initiatives underway
 - E.g. Federal Labour Standards Review public hearings were held in the fall of 2005 and submissions made to increase annual paid vacation to international norms from 2 weeks (except in Saskatchewan where it is 3 weeks) to 4 weeks
 - Recent efforts to introduce higher minimum wages at both Ontario and national levels



Comprehensive Approaches

- Two approaches that have been adopted in many European countries and, to some extent, in the province of Quebec are:
 - Municipal Family Policies
 - Offices of Time (Bureaux des temps)
- Both of these approaches involve municipalities as key actors



Municipal Family Policies

- Municipalities in countries such as Italy, France and Switzerland, as well as in Quebec, have taken explicit responsibility for the well-being of families and children in their cities
- The vision of the City of Sherbrooke is “To make Sherbrooke a city that provides families with an outstanding living environment that assists parents in their goal of helping every child grow into an adult citizen of tomorrow.”
- http://ville.sherbrooke.qc.ca/fr/accueilFamille/rapportProjet_eng.pdf



Urban Time Policies (UTP)

- Urban time policies (les bureaux des temps) were launched in Italy in the 1980s, now in France, Germany
- UTPs are an excellent example of horizontal policy-making at the municipal level
- The ultimate objective of UTPs is to improve the quality of life of citizens' through better organization and allocation of living and working times
- Examples of UTPs include: changing the hours of libraries, municipal services, recreation facilities to better meet the needs of families; modifying work or school hours to be better harmonized; improving public transit times to ease transportation bottlenecks





For additional information:

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