

Child Care and Early Years Act Policy Brief #1

Age Groupings, Ratios, Group Size, and Proportion of Qualified Staff

This policy brief is part of a 4-part series intended to summarize community consensus, research and policy recommendations on the Ontario's government's proposed regulatory changes to the *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA). This brief responds to the proposed Schedule 2, which would introduce a new, optional age grouping model.

Community Survey Results

In a community survey of 2,400 RECEs, child care operators, and families, more than three-quarters of respondents opposed all Schedule 2 changes:

- 90% of respondents were opposed to combining Infant and Toddler age groups,
- 87% opposed proposed changes to Preschool age groups,
- 77% opposed proposed changes to Kindergarten age groups, and
- 81% opposed the proposed changes to School Age groups.

Individual Consultation Responses

The AECEO and OCBCO received 69 individual responses, all of which specifically opposed Schedule 2.

Organizational Consultation Responses

"The College recommends that the Ministry reconsider the proposed Schedule 2, especially the combining of infants and toddlers into the same group." - College of Early Childhood Educators.

"The proposed changes to age ranges, group sizes, staff to child ratios, and qualifications could risk the quality, health, and safety of child care, and place undue pressure on an already strained early years workforce." - City of Toronto, Children's Services.

"Inuuqatigiit Centre and Tungusuvvingat Inuit do not support the proposed changes that are Schedule 2, as increasing group sizes and the child-to-staff ratio will decrease the quality of service within Inuit Early Years services. The needs of children are increasing, requiring the implementation of additional supports and investment in resources to ensure the well-being of children is prioritized." - Inuuqatigiit Centre and Tungusuvvingat Inuit.

"Schedule 2 will negatively impact the quality of early care and education; children's emotional and physical safety and well-being; and the well-being of staff." - Owl Child Care Services of Ontario.

"The proposal to leave the decision as to which ratio and group size framework to operate under to individual licensees is akin to creating two different maximum speed limits on highways and leaving it up to drivers to decide which one to follow." - Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Summary of Evidence /Research

Schedule 2 age groupings and ratios are contradictory to a comprehensive body of research which demonstrate that smaller group sizes and enhanced ratios lead to higher quality child care programs. As the [Childcare Resource and Research Unit](#) summarizes:

"Overall, the research finds that fewer children per adult (better or higher, ratios) are associated with: higher global quality scores; more interaction between staff and children, more responsive caregiving; and better academic, cognitive, and social outcomes and better behavioural outcomes such as more cooperative behaviour. Ratios also have a direct impact on staff—on working conditions and key human resource factors such as staff morale, recruitment, retention and turnover, which all, in turn, influence quality as experienced by children."

Recommendation

There is a wide community consensus and clear evidence against the proposed changes in Schedule 2. We urge the Ministry of Education to listen to community voices and reflect on the research. We recommend that the Ministry of Education does not proceed with the implementation of Schedule 2.