



**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
ACTION SHEET**

DATE: September 14, 2022
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: Before and After School Child Care

Recommendation:

The Business Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct staff to prepare a pilot before and after school care program for September 2023 based on the requirements as outlined in this Action Sheet dated September 14, 2022, and report progress to the Board prior to final implementation.

Background:

On February 23, 2022, the Board passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) requests a staff report on the viability of creating a before and after school care program, including a business case for a pilot program, utilizing CUPE support staff, and where:

- The program is financially self-sustainable, given no funding for such a program from the Ministry of Education for staffing;
- Costs charged for services are on a cost-recovery basis to maintain the lowest possible cost to those accessing the provision of before and after school care service;
- Consideration has been given to the District's experience of piloting the Seamless Day pilot program; and
- Will be provided to the Board in September 2022.

This Action Sheet is intended to be responsive to that motion and provide the rationale for the recommended motion noted above.

It should be noted, and it will be repeated, that this memo and the recommendation are intended to address school aged before and after school care only and not 0-5 child care more broadly.

Discussion:

Summary

In the Spring of 2022, the Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Child Care. While the implications of this shift are not yet fully crystallized, it is likely that school districts will take on an increasing role in the area of child care.

This Board has been proactive in this regard, successfully applying for funding to expand child care opportunities on school sites. In fact, it is anticipated that three sites will host expanded opportunities in the coming school year: Forest Park, Chase River, and Ladysmith Primary. Prior to this expansion the District already hosts 26 provisions (licenses) of services by 11 different providers at 23 sites for a total of 723 spaces.

School Age Before and/or After School Care, prior to MCFD approved spaces:

- Brechin – 24 spaces (1 provider, Katie's Korner)
- Cedar Elementary – 57 spaces (1 provider, Happy Faces BandASC)
- Cinnabar Valley – 20 spaces (1 provider, BGC)
- Cilaire – 20 spaces (1 provider, North Cedar BandASC)
- Syuwén'ct (Coal Tyee) – 20 spaces (1 provider, BGC)
- Departure Bay – 47 spaces (2 providers, North Cedar BandASC and ILM)
- Fairview – 43 spaces (2 providers, Malaspina and ILM)
- Forest Park – 20 spaces (1 provider, BGC)
- Frank J Ney – 40 spaces (1 provider, North Cedar BandASC)
- Georgia Ave – 20 spaces (1 provider, Georgia Ave BandASC)
- Hammond Bay – 20 spaces (1 provider, VI Kidz Kompany)
- Ladysmith Primary – 43 spaces (1 provider, ILM)
- Mountain View – 25 spaces (1 provider, VI Kidz Kompany)
- McGirr – 44 spaces (1 provider, North Cedar BandASC)
- Park Avenue – 20 spaces (1 provider, North Cedar BandASC)
- Pauline Haarer – 40 spaces (1 provider, North Cedar BandASC)
- Pleasant Valley – 25 spaces (1 provider, VI Kidz Kompany)
- Quarterway – 24 spaces (1 provider, Les Grands Amis de Celine)
- Randerson – 25 spaces (1 provider, VI Kidz Kompany)
- Rock City – 40 spaces (1 provider, Sprouting Tigers OSC)
- Seaview – 24 spaces (1 provider, BGC)
- Uplands – 54 spaces (1 provider, Uplands Park BandASC)

Surplus sites with before and after care include:

- 3rd Avenue in Ladysmith (Old Board Office) – 8 Group Multi-Age spaces, as well as other full day spaces
- Dufferin – 20 spaces (1 provider, Les Petits Amis de Celine)

District sites that are not used for *any* child care, infant/toddler through multi-age, nor have any planned MCFD spaces include:

- Gabriola Elementary
- Island ConnectEd
- Ladysmith Intermediate
- Ecole North Oyster
- NDSS
- Ladysmith Secondary
- Cedar Secondary
- Dover Bay Secondary
- Wellington Secondary
- Woodlands/Learning Alt. - Majority closed (prepped for swing space)
- Davis Road – closed – Majority licensed to Town of Ladysmith
- Rutherford – closed – prepped for swing space and approved to reopen
- South Wellington – Leased to RDN 25 years
- Woodbank Primary – Majority of space licensed to SFN

MCFD approved child care projects (108 infant/toddler, 144 Group 3-5 and 260 before and after spaces (total 512)

- Forest Park - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 48 before and after spaces (total 76)
- Chase River - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 44 before and after spaces (total 72)
- Ladysmith Primary - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)
- Rock City - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)
- QQS - 12 infant/toddler and 16 Group 3-5 spaces (total 28)
- Seaview - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)
- Quarterway - 24 before and after spaces (total 24)
- Georgia Ave. - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)
- Pleasant Valley - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)
- Cilaire - 12 infant/toddler, 16 Group 3-5 and 24 before and after spaces (total 52)

To date the District has not provided any of the services associated with the new infrastructure. Child care is not within the specific mandate of public education. This continues to be the case, despite the change in the Ministry noted above. The Board does have the authority to provide services if it so wishes. The District is currently about to offer a Ministry supported pilot program for “Seamless Day” child care at Pleasant Valley. However, this model is not a traditional before and after care model and the memo does not provide a recommendation on the expansion of such a program due to its prohibitive costs. Moreover, the memo does not contemplate 0-5 childcare and focuses on before and after school care.

Outlined below are the opportunities and challenges of providing before and after school care (not 0-5 child care) care including:

1. The educational benefits and challenges;
2. Infrastructure and Maintenance Issues;
3. Fee Collection and non-payment of fees;
4. Cost and cost recovery;
5. Management and central organization;
6. Site impact and scheduling;
7. Human Resources benefits and challenges;
8. Labour Relations Issues; and
9. Experience with the Seamless Day program

In preparing this memo staff have consulted with a number of Districts currently engaged in pilot programs associated with active before and after school programs.

As the system continues to come out of the pandemic, staff cannot recommend expanding the District’s mandate to include before and after school care broadly. While there are a number of significant issues, the human resource issue is the single biggest challenge facing the District’s current services, even before considering the single largest expansion of services since the expansion to full day kindergarten. Filling absent employees is already a challenge in schools that thankfully have many adults for back up in the event of a shortage of replacements. The risk of a small program running short is significant.

Nevertheless, the concept of the provision of before and after school care is one that would likely have a benefit to students and families despite the significant investment of K-12 resources that it will require.

Education Benefits and Challenges

This approach would provide both benefits and challenges from an educational perspective. Reducing the number of transitions for a family and providing a consistent space for a child to settle each day can be a benefit for some. We would also have greater impact on the quality and structure of a play-based, exploratory before and after school program. However, the challenges that come hand in hand is that for some students, having an extended day in a school setting may not provide the 'break' they need despite the programming offered. In addition, offering before and after school care at a school site does reduce the transition for the family but not necessarily for the child as the program would not be offered in their own classroom space.

Infrastructure and Maintenance

The District currently houses before and after school care in a variety of locations including portables (in some cases owned by external parties), purpose built out buildings (e.g. John Barsby), surplus buildings (e.g. #10 Strickland, 730 Third and 426 Selby) as well as shared spaces within schools such as multipurpose rooms (e.g. Brechin). With the exception of the spaces funded by the Ministry of Children and Families, which are contractually required to be maintained for child care purposes, the District must prioritize District spaces for class size and composition requirements. This means that as schools grow, District owned portables must be used for K-12 purposes. Also, where enrollment is tight, we may be forced to use some multipurpose spaces for classroom spaces. Further, space is increasingly needed in surplus buildings for District functions which are displaced due to classroom pressures (e.g. Dufferin). We understand that sharing a classroom space can be difficult to maintain and have impacts on the classroom teacher and should be avoided.

Given this reality, while infrastructure does not currently prevent the District from contemplating the provision of before and after school care, it does limit the spaces that such care can reasonably occur due to space constraints.

We also note that the facilities currently being built at Chase River, Forest Park, Ladysmith Primary etc. are both before and after care as well as 0-5 child care. Unfortunately, the current business model (even for a non-profit) requires that the before and after care is used to subsidize the provision of the 0-5 care. Ironically, sites with the new builds are not ideal locations for the District to contemplate the provision of before and after care at this time.

With respect to maintenance, staff have previously reported to the Board on this issue ([child care rates](#)). At this time stand-alone facilities are not covered by our annual facilities grant nor are subject to support under various capital programs. This would mean that a maintenance charge would need to be incorporated in the District's cost recovery estimates. Notably, in shared spaces within a school, this issue would be minimized (although there may be issues associated with sharing space that will be addressed in the site impact section).

It is the opinion of staff that assuming a maintenance cost was included in the costs of the before and after fees, that this aspect would be neutral assuming that an appropriate space is available.

Fee Collection and Non-Payment of Fees

From a technical perspective, the District is contemplating a number of potential options to collect fees associated with before and after school care. We note the issue of subsidy is addressed under the “Management and Administration” Section.

These options include post-dated cheques, e-transfer, pre-authorized debit, and using the bill payment system where the District is set up as a payee and individuals pay through their online banking. We are currently using the pre-authorized debit process with the Seamless Day pilot and would likely recommend using this option for before and after school care programs as well. While the non-payment of fees has not been a problem reported by the Districts currently operating programs, this method gives the District control over the collection of funds reducing the likelihood of issues collecting fees. Ultimately, with the exception of the additional administrative burden, the fee collection process should be relatively simple to create.

Facilities’ experience with rentals is that all fees be paid in advance of the service requested, and if the service is not used then credits can be considered in accordance with applicable policies.

Cost and Cost Recovery

The cost of the program will be dependent on how it is structured and what charges are associated with the program. The costs may include (depending on the location and staffing of the program):

1. Staffing
2. Custodial
3. Capital Replacement and Maintenance
4. Supplies
5. Management and Grant Support
6. Overhead

The attached link provides costing for a single site program¹:

[NLPS 2022-23 Before and After School Care - Program Estimates.xlsx](#)

The workbook contains 4 tabs where 2 tabs provide costing that includes staffing the child care site with Responsible Adults (RA), and the other 2 tabs reflect the costs associated with using Education Assistants (EA). As reflected, in each of the scenarios, with a daily fee of \$20.00 the District will be in a deficit position. Further, these are estimated costs and may not be inclusive of all those that may be applicable to running the program. Important to note that for the 2022/23 fiscal year, the Ministry of Education and Child Care has provided funding (\$175,000) which may be used to hire a program administrator. However, this is limited term funding that is not anticipated to continue. Thus, the costing does not include a prorated credit reducing the deficit, as staff felt it was important to reflect the ongoing commitment required to support the program with the estimated cost, exclusive of any one-time supplement. It also does not include the cost of the community school coordinator in the event that a portion of one of the positions was used for before and after school purposes.

In order to “break-even” in each of the two staffing scenarios, the daily fee to parents/guardians would need to be increased to \$22.50 per day if staffed with RAs, or \$24.00 per day if staffed with EAs.

¹ Please note that the expenses are estimates only. For instance, costs associated with Maintenance/Grounds may vary depending on the location of the program. Further, the child care administrator costs, at least for the first year, would not be required due to Ministry funding. There may be other variances and the estimates are intended to be conservative in nature.

Management and Administration

Running a program will require management. There are a number of potential options including providing FTE at the school level that could be provided to a Vice Principal (VP) for assisting with the program, an on-site manager or a central manager assigned to all programs (if a pilot were to be expanded).

Staff is not recommending adding such a duty to a VP at a school level. The position is already complex and even with additional FTE, additional responsibilities seem unreasonable. Most educators are not trained in operating before and after school care programs and the complexity of running a licensed child care facility is significant.

In one of the Districts providing programming there is a centralized manager to support four different locations. This manager operates the program, deals with all aspects of licensing, fees, manages and schedules employees as well as assists in applying for subsidies for parents. This centralized management structure would appear to be the most effective structure.

The District should only contemplate a single site, if it were to proceed with a pilot. The structure may involve either a part time manager who has other duties or alternatively a foreman type position for site management and scheduling. For the purpose of assisting in the application for grants and subsidies, the District should consider changing the job description of the one of the community school coordinators to assist with this aspect of the program given their expertise. In the event of an expansion of the program to other sites, a manager would likely have to be hired with the costs split between the various programs. Whether the foreman role and community school coordinator assistance would still be required, would be determined at a future date.

We note that the District has received funding from the Ministry of Education for District Principal – Early Years and Care. This position may also be effective while the funding exists to provide these services. However, given the remuneration of a principal, it is not a realistic long-term solution to the management of a before and after school program without ongoing funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. We would envision that this temporary position be used to organize the programming.

Site Impact and Scheduling

As noted above, there may be minimal site impact depending on the specific site. However, if the District requires shared spaces there will likely be tensions that will need to be addressed through proactive discussion at the school level and ongoing dialogue. This includes EAs that need to get from the before care classroom to their EA assigned classroom (or vice versa) in a timely manner to be present and ready to support whatever challenging circumstances for that day.

Scheduling issues will vary depending on how the program proceeds. For instance, if the program is staffed by split shift RAs then scheduling is relatively straight forward. The District would hire sufficient RAs to staff the programs as well as a cohort of replacements that would be prioritized for the programs. This process would be done centrally by the manager.

If EAs were to perform the duties, the District would require not only a change to the hours of the position but also a school with sufficient numbers of EAs to cover both the morning and evening shift without impacting the K-12 program. Further, the hours would have to be a requirement, and individuals would be unlikely to have the option of continuing their shorter hours. Hours would have to be offered to the most senior EA. It is unlikely that a school with only 3 or 4 EAs working before school and after school would be enough. It is not clear that all EAs will want extended hours, and it would be likely be a requirement in impacted schools. This would mean EAs may have to transfer to other sites involuntarily. This could impact afterschool supervision and bell to bell student contact time. In at least one District, RAs perform the duties on a split shift basis.

Human Resources and Risk Management – Benefits and Challenges

As the Board is aware, the District has faced a critical shortage of EAs, particularly with respect to casuals. This issue has been ongoing and is sector wide. Further, over the last number of years this Board has increased funding to support additional positions. While we have been able to fill positions, failure to fill daily absences has continued to be a problem. Our dispatch staff and schools work well to cover situations where student and staff health and safety is impacted by the shortage. Such a triage model is not sustainable.

Specifically, during the 2022-23 school year with CUPE associated staff (EAs, clerical etc.), the District has been averaging 32 (EAs only - 24.5) failures to fill a day. Failure to fills are triaged within a school. Typically, while not optimal, individuals are shifted to support safety issues first and then educational needs. In the event that EAs or other CUPE staff performed before and after school duties and the failure to fill rates continue, there will be no one to watch the children which could create a safety issue in the morning as before school care opens prior to other staff being onsite. It could also mean calling parents to collect their children as after school care would be closed, asking the principal, the District principal or manager or other exempt staff to perform supervision duties.

In addition to the issue of staffing sites, central staff are required to support the programming including DLS, human resources, financial services and facilities.

From a positive perspective, there may be an opportunity to provide EAs additional hours which our CUPE partners have been requesting. It should also be noted that there may be benefits to district recruitment efforts by being able to provide additional hours of employment.

Labour Relations Issues

From a labour relations perspective, a number of things would be required. For example, if EAs were to perform the duties, the District would require the maximum amount of hours to be extended. Without this, the District could not contemplate using school based EAs for the role.

The District would likely require all EAs on site to work, or be available to work, the extended hours. If the positions were RAs on split shifts, the issues are largely addressed.

There is potential significant issues with continuity of schools associated with the possibility of layoff at school level that must be addressed.

Experience with the Seamless Day

Our Seamless Day pilot program was supposed to begin last January. The District's experience has been helpful in understanding the complexity of the provision of before and after school programming (despite the fact that the program cannot be realistically replicated without a significant investment from the Ministry of Education and Child Care). For instance, the licensing of space, the sharing of space, filling hard to fill positions etc. all contributed to the delay in the program. In addition, significant staff time funded from the District's K-12 operational budget was used.

We note that the program did provide useful lessons in the event that a more traditionally before and after school care pilot is pursued.

Potential Pilot

As there are many providers operating in the District, some consideration should be given to locations for operation. A location with no provider may offer expanded services. An existing space used for operations may offer lower facility operating costs (e.g. multipurpose room), whereas a surplus space a higher cost (e.g. surplus portable). A surplus portable has a hidden cost of a new one if a school requires a portable for a division. If a surplus portable is used, the District may wish to utilize an older one, alter it and take it out of service for use as a division in the future. It may also be possible to check with current providers to see what their future plans are and if they are planning to cease operation (such as at Ladysmith Primary School). Consideration could be given for continuation of services in that location. If a location required capital improvements (or a new space is desired), it may be possible to apply for MCFD funding - this would require a multi-year agreement to offer services from that location and take some time to set up.

It may also be possible to co-locate a pilot at a facility with a before and after to expand seats in that school to meet demand. Consideration for partnership for operational mentoring may be possible.

Conclusion

As the report suggests, providing District before and after school care programming is anticipated to be a challenge. Nevertheless, there are clear benefits to our families and employees if a sustainable program can be built. Balancing the concerns and the benefits, staff are recommending that the Board direct a pilot to be created. However, the motion also requires staff come before the Board to report on progress so that the various issues are addressed prior to finally proceeding.