

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Minister provides progress update on kindergarten transition**

**CHARLOTTETOWN, PE, March 5, 2010** — Several milestones have been reached in the process to bring kindergarten into Island schools by September 2010, says Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Doug Currie.

“This is the largest educational initiative in the modern history of our province and I am pleased to advise parents and the public that we are on target,” said the minister. “Having a full-day kindergarten program in our schools this September will mean that Island children will have the same learning opportunities as five-year-olds across the country. Children will have earlier access to interventions and school supports and their kindergarten and primary teachers will be working together as part of one school team.”

Minister Currie said many major tasks have now been completed, including the registration of students and the assignment of space for kindergarten in all schools.

Kindergarten furniture, equipment and supplies are being ordered. Rather than rows of desks in these classrooms, there will be tables for activities, computer centres, learning stations and soft floor space. Furnishings will include natural wood finishes and bright primary colors. Classrooms will be well equipped and supplies will be shipped to schools over the summer months.

Sessions on play-based learning and the kindergarten curriculum have been held for over 300 department and board staff; school administrators; and grade 1, resource, music and phys ed teachers. More sessions will soon be offered for school counsellors, teacher librarians, grade 2 teachers, specialists and support staff. These are excellent learning opportunities that have met with very positive response from school-based staff.

The services that children with special needs now receive in early childhood centres will continue in the school setting. Case conferences will be held soon to allow parents, teachers and specialists to arrange school-based supports such as individualized educational plans, resource teachers and educational assistants.

All Island children who are registered for kindergarten this fall will take part in an assessment of their developmental skills in the spring. The new Early Years Assessment (EYE) indicates how well children are developing in four key areas, including self awareness, cognitive skills, language and communication, and gross and fine motor development. The half-hour assessment will be administered by teachers in local schools from April 19 to 30. Parents of children who are registered for kindergarten will receive information on the assessment in the mail.

This spring, families will be invited to take part in the *Welcome to Kindergarten* program at their child's school. This will provide them with the opportunity to meet their kindergarten teacher and receive information on how they can prepare their child for kindergarten.

Certified early childhood educators are being given first consideration for the new kindergarten teacher positions. A new Bachelor of Education program has been developed by UPEI to enable them to obtain their degree over a six-year period by 2016.

UPEI Dean of Education Dr. Tim Goddard says the interim program will be a high quality program. The 20 courses that the new kindergarten teachers will take are very similar to those taken by students in the B Ed Early Years concentration. University officials are confident that the program will receive the required approvals from the university and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission in time for it to be offered in September.

Minister Currie met with the new kindergarten teachers recently and welcomed them to Island schools. "I am very pleased that people with your expertise, experience and commitment will be joining a larger team of educators where you will have new opportunities to learn, improved wages and a dynamic working environment," he said.

The minister added that the transfer of kindergarten and the renewal of the early childhood sector are both part of one major commitment that the provincial government made to Island children when Premier Ghiz accepted the Kindergarten Commissioner's report. "Last July, the Premier said yes, we will offer kindergarten in schools but we won't do this without lending our full support to the early childhood sector during and

after the transition. We are now looking carefully at how we can best support Island children, families and communities in the April budget,” said the minister.

Government has contracted Kathleen Flanagan & Associates to help develop a vision for the early childhood sector and a five-year plan to create a strong and sustainable system of early childhood services and supports.

For more information on the kindergarten transition, visit [www.edu.pe.ca](http://www.edu.pe.ca)

**Backgrounder attached**

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