



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2024-10

MEETING DATE: MARCH 21, 2024

SUBJECT: BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2024-10 (Integrated Social Services Division) we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, direct Administration to prepare a letter from the Board Chair to the Chairs of the Boards of Education throughout the District of Thunder Bay outlining the school boards' responsibility for the offering and delivery of before and after school programming;

AND THAT a letter enclosing a copy of this resolution and Board Report No. 2024-10 be sent to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Education, local Members of Provincial Parliament, member municipalities, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers' Association, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Rural Ontario Municipality Association, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with information regarding proposed closure of four before and after school programs, and to identify legislated responsibility for before and after school programs.

BACKGROUND

On January 23, 2024, TBDSSAB received correspondence from Footsteps Family Centre stating their intention to close four before and after school programs that they operate in school environments, effective June 30, 2024. The programs impacted are located at Our Lady of Charity, Holy Cross, Gorham & Ware and Five Mile schools, serving families under two of the school boards in Thunder Bay. Based on current program enrollment, this will impact 157 children and their families.

As a result of this announcement, families impacted by this decision reached out to TBDSSAB seeking information and explanation on why this decision was made. TBDSSAB, as the Service System Manager, provided a response to families which was shared with the Board by the CAO on February 15, 2024. The response stated that operational decisions made by licensed child care providers are not the responsibility of TBDSSAB operational decisions, including program delivery and sites, which are decided by the provider organization's Board of Directors and management.

At the Board's February 15, 2024 meeting, the CAO provided a verbal update on this matter and stated a full report would be provided to the Board at the March meeting.

COMMENTS

On February 15, 2024, Footsteps Family Centre hosted a meeting which included the Board of Directors for Footsteps Family Centre, a representative from the Lakehead District Public School Board, the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board Early Years Lead, the Director of Education and Board Chair, the Ministry of Education Program Advisor - Licensing and Inspections Unit, TBDSSAB Manager - Child Care and Early Years, and a representative from each local MPP office. Not attending were the Ministry of Education Early Years Program Advisor and Education Officer who were also invited to attend. The discussion was led by the Board Chair of Footsteps and their Executive Director.

The rationale for the decision to close was provided to all parties, which included but not isolated to the following: lack of qualified staff, lack of supply staff, split shift requirements of staff, concern for quality programming, increases of behaviours in children, and number of Serious Occurrence reporting to the Ministry based on licensing requirements.

The School Boards expressed their concern over the closure of the programs and the impact this will have on families. It was noted by the TBDSSAB Manager, Child Care and Early Years that the responsibility for before and after school programming is the responsibility of the school boards as indicated in the *Education Act*. Alternately, Child Care programs are responsible for education and care for children ages 0-6 and has been offering these programs as an in-kind service to the school boards. The additional pressures faced by Footsteps have now made that difficult for the successful daily operations of the programs. No final decision was reached by the end of the meeting on the closures of the sites.

The responsibility for the provision of extended day child care (before and after school) in Ontario is defined in the *Education Act*, Ontario Regulation 221/11. This regulation states "*Every board shall, in every elementary school of the board in which instruction is given in any part of the primary division or junior division, operate an extended day program or ensure the operation of a third party program under subsection 259 (1) of the Act for pupils of the board who are enrolled in junior kindergarten or kindergarten.*"

In accordance with Section 2 of [O. Reg. 221/11](#), school boards are required to ensure the provision of a before and after school program for every elementary school serving students in the primary and/or junior division (for example, from Kindergarten to grade 6) where there is sufficient demand and/or viability. Programs must be available on every instructional school day.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

This Report aligns with the strategic plan strategy of Encouraging Advocacy and Awareness.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications related to this Report.

CONCLUSION

With the impact of the closure of the before and after school programs operated by Footsteps Family Centres, Administration recommends providing clear legislative requirements and clarifying responsibilities for before and after school programs to all school boards in the District of Thunder Bay to support the needs of families

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Attachment #1 [Letter from Footsteps Family Centres, dated February 23, 2024](#)

PREPARED BY:	Dawnette Hoard, Manager, Child Care and Early Years Programs
SIGNATURE	
APPROVED BY	Ken Ranta, Director, Integrated Social Services Division
SIGNATURE	
SUBMITTED BY:	William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer



January 23, 2024

Attention:

Tony Romeo, Chairperson, Thunder Bay District Catholic School Board
Ellen Chambers, Chair, Lakehead District School Board
Kristy Wick, Program Advisor, Ministry of Education Licensing and Compliance Division
Dawnette Hoard, Manager, Child Care and Early Years Programs - DSSAB

RE: Closure of School Aged Programs

On behalf of the Footsteps Family Centre Board of Directors we would like to inform all interested parties of our intention to close all school aged programming, including Before and After School Care, effective June 30, 2024. Currently, Footsteps operates programs at Our Lady of Charity, Holy Cross, Gorham Ware and Five Mile schools, serving families under both school boards in Thunder Bay.

The decision to cease servicing these programs has not been made lightly and has included several tough conversations around the table. Major factors in this outcome include, but are not limited to, safety for students and staff, staffing levels, and quality of care.

We recognize that this will be challenging for families, but also understand that the school boards, under the Ministry of Education guidelines, hold a shared responsibility in offering these programs. Therefore, we invite you all to join the conversation, as we would like to share our feedback, rationale, and present some ideas regarding a potential partnership in transition.

Please join us virtually on **February 15, 2024, at 10:00 am**; a meeting link will be circulated at a later date.

In an effort to be open and transparent, the staff working in these programs have been informed of our intentions. Further to that, we plan to communicate our decision with the families we serve no later than February 23, 2024.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our meeting request. We look forward to meeting with you to continue these conversations.

Regards, Footsteps Family Centre Board of Directors

CC: Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
MPP Lise Vaugeois, Thunder Bay-Superior North
MPP Kevin Holland, Thunder Bay-Atikokan