

Childhood education pioneer Fraser Mustard dies

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Mustard co-authored a seminal report in 1999 that urged the Ontario government to foster positive early childhood growth. (Courtesy University of South Australia)

Dr. Fraser Mustard, a Canadian pioneer of early childhood development whose work helped pave the way for full-day kindergarten, has died. He was 84. A colleague at the Founders Network says Mustard died at home Wednesday night surrounded by his family. Cheryl Mooney, who worked with Mustard for 15 years, says the doctor was a visionary who saw what needed to be done before others did.

His primary mission was to convey the crucial importance of a child's experiences in the first six years of life.

Mustard co-authored a seminal report in 1999 that urged the Ontario government to foster positive early childhood growth with new programs and increased funding, among other recommendations.

Though the initiative was voted down, a similar report by his friend Charles Pascal a decade later [laid the foundation](#) for the government's full-day kindergarten program. "I think he was happy to see results," Mooney said in an interview Thursday. "He wanted to see more keep happening."

Dr. Fraser Mustard on The Current

[Listen](#) to the CBC's Hana Gartner interview Dr. Fraser Mustard in June 2010. When Ontario, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island forged ahead with full-day kindergarten last year, Mustard called it "a step in the right direction." But he stressed intervention to improve a child's development should start even earlier.

A distinguished career

Mustard's focus on childhood and education marked a shift in his career after years spent in medical research. Mustard got his start in the 1950s and '60s, studying medicine and researching blood platelets, arterial disease and the effects of Aspirin. In 1967, he helped develop McMaster University's unique Faculty of Medicine — a model that has since been replicated all over the world.

Through the 1970s, he served on government councils and committees, looking into health planning and education. Then, in 1982, he became the founding president of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, where he spent the next 14 years.

Over the course of his career, Mustard became one of Canada's most distinguished and celebrated researchers. His work earned him the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada. His story is chronicled in a 2010 biography, *Connections and Careers*, by Marian Packham.