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***Neulbom* Schools operated across the nation from 2025, reinforcing government' s greater responsibility on education and childcare**

Key Points

- First grade elementary students will partake in an edu-care pilot program at their choice, which will help them transition to a new school life. This will also, in part, resolve the childcare gap caused by early school dismissal.
- After-school programs will be in line with students' future prospects and needs.
 - Classes will be opened according to student demands, which will be consisted of play- and experience-based learning such as coding, art, music, and sports.
 - The limit on vouchers for students in the low-income group will be eased to achieve equal educational opportunities for all.
- Parents' burden on childcare will be lifted through the flexible childcare programs made available at their convenience.
 - The types of childcare programs will be diversified (e.g., morning, intermittent, and temporary programs). The hours for night childcare will be gradually expanded until 8 p.m.
 - Five center-based childcare will be opened every year to resolve issues with high demand in crowded and/or metropolitan areas.
- The operation system will be established for provincial offices of education, and relevant personnel will be deployed to lift the workload of teachers.

- On January 9, the Ministry of Education (headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Lee Ju-ho) will unveil a plan on *Neulbom* (edu-care) School at the Government Complex in Sejong, in its effort to reinforce the government's responsibility on education and childcare and further promote after-school programs for elementary students.
- As a national agenda to achieve the current administration's goals and objectives in the field of education, *Neulbom* (edu-care) School, as the name implies "always (*neul* in Korean) pleasant like the spring (*bom* in Korean)," aims to enhance the quality of after-school and childcare programs, phasing in the policy integration of education and childcare.

<< Background Information >>

- The Ministry's plan on *Neulbom* School was initiated with an intention to make individualized education and childcare available to all students, in order to ease parents' burden on childcare, and to close the achievement gap among students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring equitable start to education.
- Once *Neulbom* School was selected as a national agenda, the Ministry of Education and provincial offices of education have formed a consultative group, collecting opinions from various regions, and discussing tasks to be carried out in accordance with local conditions,
 - ※ Provincial offices of education meetings (5 times), regional consultative group meetings (13 times), on-site policy meetings for superintendent of education (Sep 14-22)
- Opinions were gathered from a number of groups including parents, experts, teachers, and relevant teacher unions in order to develop a plan that is catered to classroom settings.

※ Meetings with parents, teachers, after-school and childcare teacher unions ('22.12.8-13), policy discussions (2 times), etc.

<< What changes will it bring? >>

- In 2025, all students who wish to participate in *Neulbom* School will be provided with quality edu-care (i.e., integrated education and childcare) before and after regular school hours, which will utilize diverse educational resources in and outside the school.
- Various educational programs will be made available to students in lower grades, beyond simple care services, and these programs will include instructions for basic academic skills as well as art, music, and sports. In addition, morning and night childcare programs will be phased in for dual-earner families, in addition to afternoon childcare programs.
- In particular, an intensive edu-care program will be piloted for first grade elementary students who wish to take part in the program, to resolve the childcare gap caused by early school dismissal in the beginning of the academic year (first 3 weeks in March).
- The private sector's participation will be encouraged in an effort to expand quality after-school programs for upper grade elementary students, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), coding, big data, as well as small group and differentiated instructions. Intermittent childcare programs will be also reinforced to consolidate education and childcare programs.
- The operation system for after-school programs will be reorganized for provincial offices of education to lift the workload of schools and teachers. In addition, a model for *Neulbom* School will be developed through the pilot operation in 2023, which will focus on offering tailored education to meet the needs of regions and schools, and it will be expanded nation-wide in 2025.

◇ Future-driven and individualized after-school programs with quality will be provided.

- Desirable programs will be opened in accordance with demands, shifting the perspective from providers (institutions) to receivers (students and parents). In addition, digital competency and individualized education will be reinforced, reflecting the rapidly changing needs of society.
- At the beginning of March, or for at least one academic semester, students will be given an opportunity to partake in play- and experience-based “edu-care programs for first graders,” which will support their smooth transition to school life.
- The allocated budget and personnel of provincial offices of education for edu-care pilot programs will be intensively supported in an effort to identify best practices of a model school; this will be the basis to establish *Neulbom* Schools and community programs.
- In order to nurture digital competencies necessary for the future society, after-school programs on new industries such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and coding will be added, and leading-edge technologies will be incorporated in edu-tech instructional methods, which may not be easy to employ in regular classroom settings.
- In addition, various private sectors such as universities, companies, organizations, and individuals will be encouraged to collaborate in delivering outstanding programs, and on-line and off-line lectures will be introduced for schools in rural areas to overcome physical barriers such as distance, time, and resources.
- Students’ choice of programs will be offered, taking account of relevant survey results, and popular classes will be additionally opened in case classes are full, and thus efforts will be made to

deliver instructions tailored to students' individual needs.

○ Indeed, after-school programs will be more concrete and solid, creating programs in line with local resources in the areas of sports and arts.

□ Support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds will be heightened; personnel will be deployed so that students with disabilities can participate in after-school activities, and mentoring sessions for students from multicultural families and North Korean defectors will be actively offered. In addition, the voucher limit for students in the low-income group, in accordance with regional conditions, will be eased so that conditions to participate in activities will be tailored to individual students.

◇ Childcare programs of students' and parents' choice will be offered at their choice of time and place.

□ Up to this date, after-school programs have been implemented around afternoon childcare, but from now on, more diversified types of programs will be made available at parents' and students' convenience such as morning and night childcare based on the conditions of communities and schools. Intermittent childcare programs will be also reinforced, which provides childcare in between after-school programs.

○ In particular, "temporary childcare" service will be piloted for students who need emergency night childcare due to special occasions or those who are on the waiting list for childcare classes, which will be offered after 5 p.m. for one day or a period of days.

□ The hours for childcare classes will be incrementally expanded until 8 p.m. based on demand, and efforts will be made to establish relevant infrastructure for night childcare – the budget for the operation and

personnel will be supported.

- Dinner and snacks will be provided in addition to psychological and mental health counseling services for students. The measures for safety will be strengthened to create a conducive environment for night childcare programs.
- In addition to childcare at the school-level, community childcare programs will be pursued in collaboration with relevant Ministries, so that improved conditions will be set forth for parents raising kids, and thus ultimately achieving a balance in family life and work.
- Child-friendly classroom spaces will be structured through renovations and repairs of old classrooms as well as regular classrooms will be used for lower grades. In order to add support for after-school childcare classes, the special allocated local budget for 2023 will be utilized, and the consolidation of after-school and childcare programs will lead to making better use of classroom spaces.
- Subsidies will be granted to support schools that may have physical spaces available for new childcare classrooms, and center-based childcare models will be developed from 2023 to 2027 (i.e., 5 models each year, 25 in total), by provincial offices of education to make collaborative efforts to meet childcare demands of schools and to resolve excess demands of overcrowded and/or metropolitan areas.

◇ After-school program operation system will be reorganized to reduce the workload of teachers and schools.

- Duties for after-school programs will be reorganized so that provincial offices of education will take lead; this will help lift the workload of teachers and schools.

- The current after-school support centers for provincial offices of education will be renamed as *Neulbom* after-school support centers, and 120 public officials in provincial offices of education will be reassigned to take charge of *Neulbom* after-school support centers, offering aids to *Neulbom* schools implemented at the school-level.
- In the second half of 2023, an advanced system for the 4th generation NEIS will be used to support school-level tasks such as conducting after-school surveys, undertaking accounting services, and granting vouchers. In addition, the NEIS nation-wide app will be used for registering classes and filling out relevant surveys.
- The integration and cooperation with local communities will be strengthened to operate *Neulbom* schools catered to the needs of local communities.
- *Neulbom* after-school support centers will be allowed to cooperate through sharing of resources, programs, and budgets based on local conditions in order to offer high quality programs.
- In case regional childcare classes are full, local governments will integrate and push ahead with community childcare programs.
- A central- and regional-level consultative group will be created; at the central level, a consultative group will be consisted of relevant Ministries such as the Ministry of Education (chaired by Deputy Minister), the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. They will work together in identifying tasks to be co-achieved, and the current system for regional childcare consultative group will be strengthened to link school and community childcare as well as to integrate provincial offices of education and local governments.

◇ **Best practices of a model school will be proliferated nation-wide, and administrative and financial support will be reinforced.**

- The Ministry of Education will select about 4 provincial offices of education with zeal and capacity, and designate them as pilot provincial offices of education for intensive care and support; best practices of a model school will be identified based on local conditions.
- Pilot provincial offices of education will carry out various tasks in accordance with local conditions including △ creating an operation system centered around local communities, △ intensively supporting edu-care at the beginning of first year in elementary school, △ expanding future-driven and tailored programs, △ diversifying the types of childcare programs.
- Lee Ju-ho, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, said, “We will take greater responsibility in education and childcare and make efforts to successfully phase in *Neulbom* school. In this context, communication and cooperation channels among relevant Ministries, local governments, and provincial offices of education will be closely integrated.”
- He added, “Education and childcare will be comprehensively offered through the consolidation of regular school instructions and childcare. The participation of private sectors will be further pushed ahead in order to create high quality programs tailored to the needs of individual students, and this will help reduce parents’ burden on their child(ren)’s participation in shadow education.”