

# Interaction

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2014



**The Political and Professional  
Child Care Landscape in Canada**

**What's Changing,  
What's Not?**

**Father Inclusive Practices**

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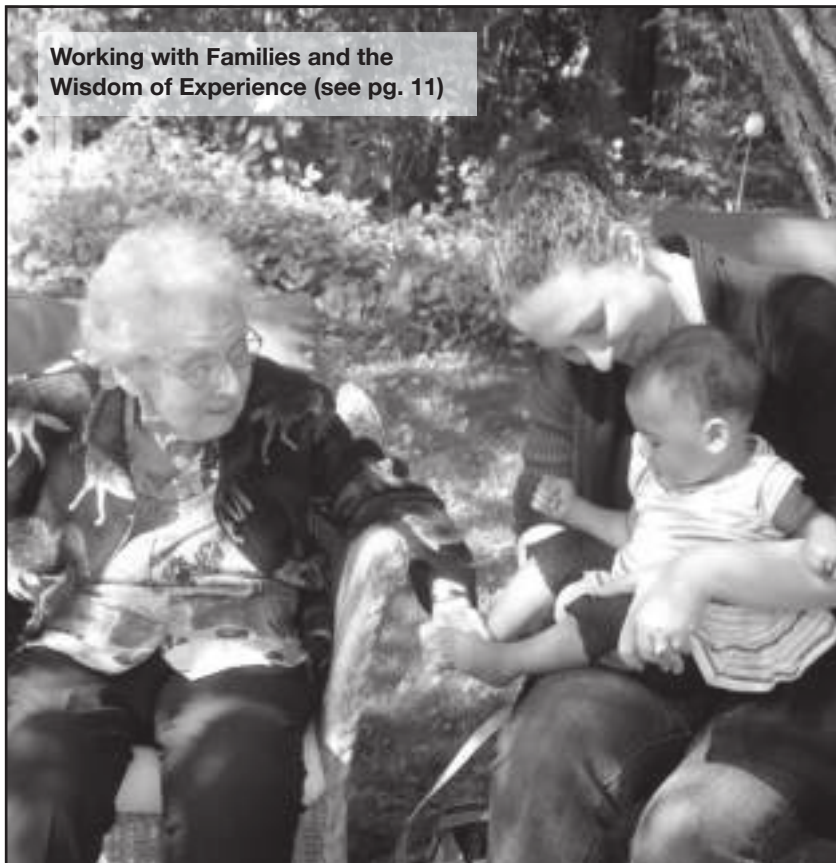
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Working with Families and the  
Wisdom of Experience (see pg. 11)



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The photo for the front cover was taken by Claire  
McLaughlin.

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## Behind the Scenes

This Canadian winter has been one of the coldest in over a decade, breaking records in low temperatures through cities across the country. Winter has been stubborn – refusing to give in to spring. The landscape has been frozen and white.

So too has the child care climate across Canada. By March, there have, tragically, been 4 children who have died in unlicensed child care centres in Ontario alone, and other cases in the west and east as well. Unbelievably, the numbers in Toronto alone are not certain because, as one report in the Toronto Star pointed out, no one in Ontario actually tracks the number of children who die in unregulated child care centres. And this comes at a time when the Canadian government's Senate scandal saw a circus act in parliament with hundreds of thousands of dollars going unaccounted for in travel and living expenses from reckless, parliamentary Senators.

So where have we come from in child care in Canada over the past decade? How can we wake up our government to listen and to support what we do? This issue highlights the amazing, tireless work and commitments that our sector makes to improve the lives of families and children who need quality child care across Canada. While the political landscape behind the doors of parliament shows us no good example of how to support Canadians in this troubling economic era, the ECE sector mobilizes with a force like an army of ants. See how British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and PEI are making real changes for the betterment of children, and all Canadians, in our Focus section. And, learn how other early childhood educators come to appreciate the importance of working with families, in the IDEAS section.

And finally, come back to Winnipeg for *Canada's Fourth National Child Care Policy Conference* taking place this fall from November 13<sup>th</sup> - November 15, 2014. *ChildCare2020: from Vision to Action*. Help put child care back on the public agenda. Join a growing community of early childhood educators, academics and researchers, policymakers, advocates, and parents—from urban, suburban, rural and Indigenous communities across Canada—all working together for a better system of early childhood education and care. Register at [www.childcare2020.ca](http://www.childcare2020.ca)

**Claire McLaughlin**, Editor  
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# Winning the Prime Minister's Awards for Early Childhood Education – My rewarding career

by **Christine MacLeod**

I knew I needed to make a change in my life and that of my family. I was working in engineering and when I gave notice to the company I was employed with, they thought I was crazy to stay home and “babysit”. I started my career in family child care and have been rewarded continually after making the decision to do so.

My husband Don and I had a two year old son who attended a wonderful family child care owned and operated by Lynda Pattison, my first mentor. She was committed to the children in her care and we became students together in the Early Childhood Education program at Kwantlen College. Lynda made family child care a place where children wanted to be and I owe her much appreciation for her guidance and continued friendship.

I have been a family child care provider for 25 years and have experienced achievements in this profession I am proud of. I am fortunate to have had many rewards in this career, with the ongoing relationships with the children I cared for being the most important. Recent grads from secondary school started as infants in my care and when they gave me a photo of them in their grad gowns — that melted my heart. How fortunate am I that they thought of me and wanted to share their success? This is just one small example of the impact that we, as child care providers, can have in a child's life.

**We have the ability to provide support for these families and to further the growth and development of the children. Being a life-long learner and putting that knowledge to practice is critical to being successful.**

As a family child care facilitator at university and college, (again thanks to Lynda) I have the fortunate experience to work with future providers who have a goal to provide the best early childhood experience for children in their care. Our program works in partnership with the Access Program for People with Disabilities; many of these students have continued their careers as Early Childhood Assistants. Their dedication is inspiring and reaffirming.

As a volunteer (regionally, provincially and nationally on many committees) I have been privileged to advocate for children and their families. I believe that family child care can have a positive impact in the lives of the children and families we care for. We have the ability to provide support for these families and to further the growth and development of the children. Being a life-long learner and putting that knowledge to practice is critical to being successful.

Recently, I received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. This is an honour and very humbling. My nominator Jaylene Crick canvassed past parents, colleagues and families currently in my child care to put together the nomination package. Not a simple task. It was humbling to read what folks had to say about their experience and their children's experience in my child care. To read their thoughts about the positive impact I have had in their lives makes me proud of what I do and encourages me to continue to do the best I can for families. I owe many thanks to my family: my husband Don, and my sons Ian and Colin for supporting me throughout my career in family child care.

Being an Early Childhood Educator is a wonderful profession with many rewards, big and small. Each day is different and it can be challenging. However, to see the world through the eyes of children is truly remarkable.



FROM WHERE I SIT

# A Tribute to Dr. Sherrill Brown

by Margaret Golberg

*Dr. Sherrill Brown passed away in March, touching many of us in the ECE network in Canada. Sherrill was a tireless advocate for children and families, for child care and for the early childhood profession.*

*Her contributions and passion to child care in Canada were captured in a tribute from two of her dear colleagues and friends, Margaret Golberg and Jane Hewes.*

I first got to see Sherrill in action at the Provincial Child Care Network meetings, although our paths subsequently crossed in many other early learning and child care endeavors. The Network was a group consisting of representatives from a variety of interests: not-for profit and for profit child care, urban and rural, child care, out of school care, family day home, the Early Childhood Professional Association and Early Childhood College representatives. The group had come together originally in the mid 90's to push for retention of the operating grants that existed at the time. Their endeavors were not successful. The operating grants were reduced in 1998 and completely eliminated in 1999. The Network stayed together in the aftermath to advocate for quality, universally accessible and affordable child care with a development focus.

When Sherrill arrived, she brought the group a voice of quiet dignity and grace that helped them focus on the reasons they had come together versus getting distracted by differences. She stepped up to chair the group, bringing her unique ability to build a professional dialogue and achieve consensus. She got the group looking at ways to go forward and when the opportunity became apparent for the group to be involved in the building of a new system in Alberta, she worked tirelessly behind the scenes. She helped the Network to form an official Association, and she wrote proposals on their behalf to the



**Dr. Sherrill Jean Brown**  
May 11, 1950 – March 14, 2014

government for both the accreditation agency and the technical supports agency. She was always conscientious in seeking input from the group to ensure the proposals had input and the back up from the field. Both her proposals were accepted: a credit to her creativity, her hard work and her dedication to improving child care in Alberta.

A new era dawned for child care in Alberta. The Network subsequently morphed into the Alberta Child Care Association. After about 10 years of skillfully guiding the Network/ACCA, Sherrill was ready to step down and that is when I took over chairing the group, and I got to know her even better. I knew I did not have the diplomatic skills that she did and I was uncertain that I could take on this challenging role, but she always reassured me that I could do it. Sherrill was my mentor: always encouraging, sharing her wisdom, a ready ear for listening, and generously fulfilling a relationship of learning, dialogue and challenge.

I will always think of Sherrill when I hear the song: “*You are the wind beneath my wings.*”

Margaret Golberg, Executive Director of Community Options: A Society for Children and Families





# Dr. Sherrill Jean Brown

## A MacEwan Tribute

by Jane Hewes

We've had many wonderful conversations about Sherrill this past week – remembering how much fun she was, how truly playful – how profoundly she influenced us and yet how quietly, how she created a sense of community wherever she went – how did she do that?

Sherrill was a born teacher, a gifted and creative educator, intuitive, energetic and spontaneous in teaching and learning relationships – equally comfortable in a room of 5 year olds as she was in a room of 25 year olds. As one student put it, “she knew how to get us up and moving and talking to each other.” She had a deeply held belief that relationships and play were the basis of learning – in her dissertation she speaks of relationships that “swirl” around one another in the classroom – I had the great privilege of team-teaching several times with Sherrill – and she did swirl and twirl in the classroom – teaching was a dance, sometimes she would dress up – donning a floppy hat or a feather boa – she loved to sing and often sang to students – and they sang back – both literally and metaphorically.

A long time colleague who worked with Sherrill supervising MacEwan practicum students describes her teaching in the field:

*“In her quiet, unobtrusive yet very skillful way, she would slide into a playroom, share a story with an older baby, rock a fussy newborn, or enjoy a cup of tea in the housekeeping centre with a toddler while keeping a watchful eye on her student. She recognized and built on each student’s strengths while challenging each to strive for excellence. She knew her students well and what motivated each – a genuine mark of an exceptional teacher.”*

In the words of one of her students:

*“Dr. Sherrill Brown has so many qualities that contribute to her excellence of teaching. They include:*

*empathy, reflective practice, always using up-to-date research and current course planning (noticeable particularly in current lecture topics and modes of presentation), ability to respond effectively to all student concerns, problems and hopes, a welcoming and encouraging disposition and possession of a broad and deep understanding of all the facets of Early Childhood Development.*

*It has been my privilege and honour to be a participant in every class (one each term), and I sensed from our first encounter in a first-year class that her teaching style was a “cut above.” This positive first impression has been re-affirmed countless times in every course I’ve taken with Sherrill as my instructor.”*

Anyone who teaches will recognize these words as high praise. We are delighted that the family has decided to create the Dr. Sherrill J. Brown Memorial Award for MacEwan ELCC students. This will help us to keep Sherrill’s memory alive in the hearts and minds of ELCC students in the years to come.

Sherrill was a distinguished scholar – unpretentious and down to earth, a brilliant mind, and a clear and critical thinker – she could engage comfortably in a room full of academics and policy makers and then turn around and

explain the conversation to a man in the street, or a newspaper reporter; she could even make it understandable to a politician, no small feat, and a challenge which she took on more than once.

Her life work as a scholar was with children – in rereading parts of her doctoral dissertation this week I was reminded of how far ahead she was in her thinking. In, *Seams of Learning: Exploring Children’s Roles as Co-Creators of Curriculum*, Sherrill was writing 20 years ago about ideas that are only just now surfacing in the scholarship of early childhood.

From 2006-2009, Sherrill served as Research Officer at MacEwan. Her contribution is recognized as essential to creating the foundation for university level research at the College. She created the infrastructure that made it possible for MacEwan faculty to apply for major external research funding. She initiated several key processes internally to support research. She brought people from diverse faculties together to develop guidelines for internal research funding, creating the policy infrastructure as well as building the community and the



organizational culture for research to flourish. She became a champion of undergraduate student research, recognizing both the potential and the significance of student engagement in research as a leading edge in our transformation from college to university status - long before others did.

Here and elsewhere, she saw the possibilities, she understood the importance of bringing people together, of creating a context for collaboration and action – she knew how to set things in motion.

In 2009, Sherrill received the International Chair Academy Exemplary Leader Award, in recognition of her contribution to research at MacEwan.

Sherrill was a committed advocate and a visionary leader – she had a “rare and exceptional combination of idealism and pragmatism.” She knew how to turn ideas into reality, quietly and confidently. Wherever she went, whatever she did, she brought people together and she got things done. And, she had a way of making it all look easy, effortless.

She was not afraid to put difficult issues on the table for discussion. She had an unwavering sense of optimism, she paid meticulous attention to detail and process, without ever losing sight of the big picture goal – she imagined herself and others in a different place.

She made a notable contribution to the campaign to restore full funding to kindergarten in Alberta in the early 90's. She served three terms as President of the Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta, participating in countless advocacy campaigns on behalf of child care and child care professionals. In the late 90s, Sherrill became involved in the campaign to address wages and working conditions in the child care sector, and played a key role in the development and implementation of Child Care Accreditation in Alberta. In a short six month period in 2004, Sherrill led the creation of two new agencies in Alberta – the Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services, and the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement. There was a window of opportunity to do something important, and the timelines were tight – it required an extraordinary and intense commitment of time and energy on the part of everyone involved. Sherrill's ability to work collaboratively with government, to problem solve, to see the big picture while keeping track of the details and throughout all, to remain calm and professional, was truly astonishing. In 2005, Sherrill received the Canadian Child Care Federation national Award for Excellence in Child Care, as well as Alberta Centennial Award, in recognition of this work.

As many of you know, Sherrill was not the kind of leader who sought accolades or recognition for herself – she was determined, capable, resolute, conscientious, hardworking and very, very

effective at building consensus amongst diverse players with competing, conflicting agendas.

Some voices from the field:

*She did this “through her gentle prodding, quiet confidence and enduring belief in the skills others have to contribute.”*

*She had an uncanny way of knowing just when and how to refocus attention on the important issues. She had a remarkable capacity to create a context for action – to set the stage – both inside the classroom and in the collegial and professional community.*

*As an advocate, she was fierce, passionate and not infrequently feisty, unwavering in her commitment to principles, clear about her values, and always willing to share the courage of her convictions with others.*

Last but certainly not least, Sherrill was a devoted wife and mother and daughter, a proud grandmother – and a sister, friend and mentor to many.

It cannot go without saying that many of us were here just 5 years ago in celebration of Robyn's life. As her colleagues and friends, we watched helplessly as Sherrill walked that path of unspeakable grief with grace, dignity and honesty.

As a friend, Sherrill was a kind and gentle spirit, deeply caring, she knew how to reach out to people.

As a mentor, Sherrill recognized and used the talents of those around her, building strength, confidence and competence with every step. Here's a comment I stumbled on this week that sums it up nicely:

*“I walked out of her office feeling inspired and excited about some of the possibilities I could entertain for myself”*

Sherrill was someone who gave all of herself to life and living each day, someone who truly made a difference in our lives. Sherrill, we will miss your butter tarts and the tablecloths, the real china teacups and the warm blueberry muffins that would so often just appear at faculty meetings. We will miss your quiet grace, your dignity, your integrity and your inspiration.

We will remember your extraordinary depth and strength of character, your fortitude and unfailing graciousness. We will remember that it is the simple things in life that really matter – loving family, loyal friends, meaningful work and lots of play.

Jane Hewes, PhD is the Program Chair of Early Learning and Child Care Program at Grant McEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta. Jane is also a past CCCF Member Council Representative.





# Father Inclusive Practices

by Anthony Randall

As a child of the seventies, the image of the authoritarian and emotionally detached father figure still holds a place in my memory. Fathers received all of the household mail, told you to “walk it off” when injured, and could grow a fearsome moustache that would rival Tom Selleck. The song at the beginning of *Wait Till Your Father Gets Home* still manages to burrow its way into my consciousness.

Fast forward a few decades and new images of fathers have emerged – emotionally aware and involved in all aspects of parenting. Take for example the recent cover story on stay-at-home dads in *Toronto Life* and it could be argued that men and the concept of fatherhood has become less, well, *manly*. Australian professor and author Raewyn Connell (2005) offers an expanded view of masculinity and argues that merely simplifying gender roles is counterproductive. Instead, fatherhood is becoming much more diverse and non-traditional fathering roles are commonplace in Canadian society (Ball & Daly, 2012).

## The Diversity of Fatherhood

Being both a father and an early childhood educator, personal experience speaks to a shift in male gender roles in the household and beyond, for example, changing diapers, preparing meals, pushing strollers around the neighbourhood and working in non-traditional fields. In Canada and the United States, the contemporary image of a father is much more complex than in previous generations. For example, a father can be a lone-parent, in a common-law relationship, gay, or a myriad of other paternal situations (American Psychological Association, 2014; Ball & Daly, 2012). Further, recent research published by the United States government points towards an increase in father involvement in all aspects of parenting (Jones & Mosher, 2013).



## Father Involvement at Child Care Centres

What does this shift in fatherhood mean for early childhood educators? As with almost everything we do as early childhood professionals, observation is an essential starting point for any decision-making process. Below is a partial list of observed father interactions:

- Dropping off and picking up children
- Leaving work early to pick up sick children
- Taking part in meetings with staff and/or resource consultants
- Making inquiries to the supervisor, for example, calling to put their child on the waitlist
- Informal conversations with staff and other parents
- Attending workshops and social events
- Volunteering in the classroom

Looking at this list, it appears that fathers are very much involved in child care. The next question to ask would be this one: what are early childhood settings doing to welcome fathers and provide an inclusive environment for all family members?



### Father inclusive language

As strong advocates of father engagement and inclusion, the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle, Australia, have identified the need for father-inclusive policies at educational facilities (Fletcher, Close, Babakhani, & Churchward, 2008). Childcare centres can update their policy manuals and websites to include “parents/guardians” or “families” instead of “mother” or “parent”. This simple shift towards *pluralisation* recognizes the involvement of all primary caregivers in a child’s life. While this approach to language demonstrates a level of inclusiveness, it should not be considered to make fathers feel welcomed by default (Fletcher, et al., 2008). Information published by the child care centres should include sections with specific language aimed at fathers to make them feel that their involvement is valued.

### First Impressions

Combined with a tour of the facility, the forms that are given to families provide an important *first impression* of the centre. It is important that the intake forms given to families are reviewed for inclusive language and formatting, for example, providing space for two signatures. If fathers do not feel included during the first impression phase, then an unintended barrier can be created (Family Action Centre, n.d.).

Along with inclusive language, it is important to ensure that positive images of fathers are included in posters and publications related to child care centres (Family Action Centre, n.d.; Fletcher, et al., 2008). Policy manuals, parent information boards, and websites should include images of men interacting with children. This inclusive practice will help to set the tone at the child care centre. Research in Sweden has shown that while services for children may welcome men, fathers often avoid spaces that are dominated by women where communication is directed towards mothers (Wells & Sarkadi, 2011).

### Lasting Impressions

Being an early childhood educator requires reflective practice. It is important to examine personal biases and reflect on how these opinions inform professional practice (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). In terms of fathers, it is possible that media-supported stereotypes and previous negative interactions inform an educator’s view. It doesn’t take long to find an example of a bumbling and loutish father in popular media. Also, it doesn’t take long to find an advertisement that depicts mothers caring for their children.

Early childhood professionals must avoid a *deficit perspective* that portrays fathers as stubborn, lacking parenting skills, and detached from their own children (King, 2000). Even



well-intentioned individuals can unwittingly reinforce stereotypes about fathers and create barriers to inclusion. For example, my own children's school in a progressive and urban neighbourhood will call the mother first, even though my work schedule is much more flexible. King (2000) writes that professionals in the social services often deliver information to mothers instead of fathers, which serves to reinforce the stereotype of the incapable father.

## Positive Interactions

Teachers working with young children can sometimes focus their energy on negative behaviours and forget to acknowledge pro-social interactions. The concept of *positive encouragement* enables teachers to build a child's sense of self-worth (Seal, 2003). This same approach to recognizing positive behaviours can be extended to all manner of adult interactions. Being a first-time father can be a nerve-wracking experience, and simple recognition from another adult, especially a trained child care professional, can go long way towards boosting a father's confidence. Further, positive interactions between fathers and early childhood educators will help to build valuable parent-professional relationships.

A simple and effective way to make fathers feel respected is to ensure that child care professionals learn the names of the fathers in the program and use them on a regular basis (Eccleston, 2009; Family Action Centre, n.d.). Further, it is important for educators to acknowledge the strengths that each father demonstrates. While some fathers may spend a lot of time volunteering, it is important to recognize that others will not have the time or confidence to get involved in such a manner. For example, while working in a toddler room, one of the children's fathers would send unused paper from his business to the child care centre with his wife. While I rarely saw this parent, his support for the classroom was palpable. Along with verbal recognition, child care professionals should provide supportive comments in print, for example, acknowledgement in centre newsletters and classroom documentation panels.

## Beyond the Classroom

When deciding on the types of workshops and family social events to offer at a child care centre, it is important to consider the interests and needs of fathers (Family Action Centre, n.d.). For example, a tool or DVD exchange would potentially draw a lot of interest and help to develop father-to-father social networks. In addition, fathers should be invited to volunteer at the centre. The same centre where I worked in the toddler room had a yearly family gardening day. One of the most successful events involved fixing old wood shelving and play structures. Many fathers were involved, and this event allowed them to model positive qualities, such as helping others.

Given the changing face of fatherhood, early childhood professionals should move beyond *welcoming* fathers, to *expecting* that fathers will become involved in their children's education in diverse ways. When scheduling meetings between families, educators and resource consultants, it is important to demonstrate flexibility. Are evening meetings a possibility? Otherwise, some fathers could unintentionally be left out of the decision-making process for their own children.

## Conclusion

Current research has demonstrated that father involvement has positive impacts on many aspects of child development (Jones & Moster, 2013; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid & Bremberg, 2007). Early childhood professionals can support father involvement by using inclusive language, updating centre policies and adopting inclusive practices. While all fathers may not get involved in the same manner, it is important to recognize and celebrate their individual strengths.

Anthony Randall is a faculty member at the Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto, Ontario. He has worked in the field for over ten years as an Early Childhood Educator and Supervisor. Also, he has appeared in two children's television series, *The Jungle Room* and *The Ocean Room*.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Class Meetings

## – a new twist on the traditional circle time?

by Robin McMillan

*Class Meetings: Young Children Solving Problems Together*

by Emily Vance rev. ed

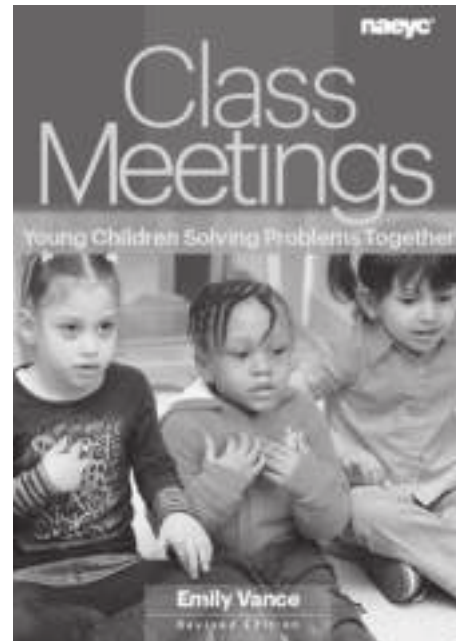
80 pages; ISBN 978-1-938113-00-0

\$15.00 available from NAEYC's Online Store

When you hear the term “class meetings” the involvement of young children is usually not the first thing that enters your mind-meetings for preschoolers? What’s outlined in Emily Vance’s work is an interesting approach to providing children with “...the opportunity to learn problem solving and conflict-management skills in a structured, nurturing way that is woven into the day.” This book was written “by a teacher, for teachers” which lends credibility to the concept.

As someone who has worked with preschoolers, I applaud the notions of creating a sense of community, using active listening, promoting cognitive development along with various life skills, empathy and respect. I agree with Vance that speaking with children in a small group can provide wonderful learning opportunities for all.

Where we differ is in the necessary components of the class meeting, specifically the *acknowledgments component*. I think it’s a great opportunity to spotlight children’s positive actions but question if having the child say “I want to acknowledge Tiffany for helping me clean up the blocks,” is a bit contrived. Could he not have said, “Thanks for helping me clean up the blocks Tiffany.”?



An educator could use their experience and knowledge of the children in the group to model the appropriate acknowledgments.

After acknowledgments comes problem-solving. Vance states that most of the problems brought to the meeting are interpersonal problems-name-calling, arguments and disagreements. While this opportunity to gather information and share perspectives has value, it needs to be facilitated properly so it doesn’t become simply a tattling session. Some issues should be resolved between only those involved as opposed to involving the whole group. While there is learning to be had, it need not always involve everyone.

The book provides an interesting approach which could be used, with some modifications, in a preschool setting. There is great value in providing children opportunities to learn from each other in a format such as a communication circle which would in time grow into the notion of a class meeting. This book provides information on how to start using this approach in your environment. Keep in mind, this could be a useful guide but as you know your group of children best, you should use a process and format that works in your environment.

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# ideas

Emotional Well-Being in Child Care



## Working with Families and the Wisdom of Experience

by *Connie Winder & Carl Corter*

I (first author) was attracted to the field of early childhood education (ECE) because I enjoyed working with children. I had worked in the children's department of my local library throughout high school and although I was quite unsure about what I wanted to do with my life, I did know that, for me, working with children was fun. I enjoyed their boisterous enthusiasm, their curiosity and wonder, and their openness to the world and I wanted to know more about their development and learning. It wasn't until much later, after I had completed my ECE training, when I conducted home visits, as part of several outreach projects that I began to truly understand the interconnectedness of children, families and their communities. Those home visits remain so vivid, even now, more than 25 years later. I learned so much about the importance of empathy, trust and respect. The families I met were so generous, honest and patient with me. The challenges they faced were often huge and their lives were complex. Having the opportunity to understand their experiences made me feel infinitely more effective as an early childhood educator and quite possibly made me



a better person. Thinking about my circuitous path to understanding the importance of developing relationships with families made me wonder how other early childhood educators come to appreciate the importance of working with families.

### Potential Benefits of Collaboration with Families

There is a great deal written about the importance of collaborating with families. Family involvement in children's early education has been

identified as an important component of high quality care (Doherty, 2004; Friendly, Doherty & Beach, 2006; Ghazvini & Readdick, 1994; Rentzou, 2011; Zellman & Perlman, 2006). National occupational standards for early childhood educators require Canadian ECEs to form collaborative relationships with families (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2010). ECE pre-service preparation programs have historically included courses on working with families, and textbooks and college and university faculty members alike espouse the belief that developing and maintaining partnerships with families is an integral part of the ECE's role (Wilson, 2010).

Family involvement in children's early education has been associated with benefits for both children and parents. There is research evidence to suggest that children whose parents are involved in their early education are better prepared for school and that parents themselves feel more empowered with regard to their children's educational activities (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Pelletier & Brent, 2002; Kernan, 2012; Seefeldt, Denton, Galper & Younoszai, 1999). In addition, strong connections between families and schools during children's elementary education have been associated with enhanced wellbeing, higher levels of academic achievement and fewer behaviour problems (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2006; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Much of the research in this area is correlational and variables such as parenting style, socioeconomic status and maternal education have all been linked to parent involvement in children's education and the associated benefits for children (Kernan, 2012). Some investigators argue that it is possible that parents who involve themselves in their children's education are committed parents to begin with. It may be their parenting style, and all the variables that affect the way people parent their

children, that also account for both their involvement in their children's education and the positive outcomes for their children (Zellman & Perlman, 2006; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). However, one of the most fascinating investigations into the benefits of parent involvement and parent-staff communication in childcare suggests that communication between child care staff and mothers has benefits that are not accounted for by parenting style or level of maternal education (Owen, Ware and Barfoot, 2000).

### **Communication Between Adults Helps Bridge Children's Worlds**

Margaret Owen and her colleagues (2000) assessed partnership behaviour between 53 mothers of three-year-old children and their children's caregivers and then observed the quality of dyadic interactions between the mother and their child and the quality of the dyadic interactions between the caregiver and the same child. These investigators found that more communication between mothers and caregivers was related to higher quality interactions between the mother and her child and the caregiver and the child. This held true even when these investigators controlled for mothers' and caregivers' beliefs about bringing up children and their own educational attainment. Mothers and caregivers who regularly exchanged information about the child were observed to be more sensitive, supportive and stimulating in their interactions with the child. Owen (2000) and her colleagues argued that this was likely because adults who have more information about the child and the child's recent experiences in other settings (e.g. home, childcare) are better able to interact with children in an informed and responsive manner. Strong connections among children's various

social settings increases the likelihood that adults in children's lives will know more about the child's experiences and supports the possibility that the demands on the child will be similar across the settings (Owen, Ware & Barfoot, 2000). The findings of this investigation provide support for the ecological view (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; 2006) that two-way communication between adults in children's various social worlds can serve to increase continuity of care. In addition, it seems reasonable to speculate that adults who communicate regularly with each other, about a child they both care for, also benefit from a deeper and more nuanced understanding of each other. They have opportunities to understand, in practical terms, each other's values, preferences and priorities and how they are applied every day.

### **Exploring the Motivations, Skills and Learning Experiences Needed to Collaborate with Families**

In order to engage in regular two-way communication with families, ECEs need to be motivated and skilled at establishing and maintaining relationships with adults. Recently, as part of a research project related to my graduate studies, I had the opportunity to work with Carl Corter (second author) to explore some questions we had about the motivations, skills and learning experiences needed for communicating with families in group child care settings. We wondered about the extent to which people attracted to the field of early childhood were initially motivated by the opportunities to work with families. We suspected that children were really the draw for most, but since there is nothing published about Canadian ECEs' motivation to enter the field we thought we should begin to find out. In addition, we wondered if the work related skills pre-

service ECEs valued might include those which would contribute to establishing and maintaining ongoing communication and relationships with families. Finally, we were curious about the ways in which experienced practitioners had learned to communicate effectively with families.

In our study we asked both pre-service ECE students and experienced ECEs about their motivations to enter to the field, and the qualities and characteristics they deemed most important for an effective ECE. We examined their responses with an eye to the motivation and skills needed to engage families. In addition, we asked experienced ECEs how they learned to develop effective partnerships with families. In this article we will present some of the highlights from this investigation and discuss their meaning in relation to current literature regarding family involvement in group childcare for typically developing children.

## Methods

### *Participants*

All beginning ECE students enrolled in a two-year ECE diploma program at a single publically funded, community college in a large urban area in southern Ontario were invited to participate. A total of 215 beginning ECE students agreed to participate and were surveyed in the second week of their program. This sample represented 87% of first year students. Those who did not participate were either absent on the day the questionnaires were administered or chose not to participate. The majority of these participants were female (93%), born in Canada (67%), spoke English as their first language (70%) and 8% of the pre-service student sample were parents. They ranged in age from 17 to 49 years of age with an overall mean of 21 years of age.

In addition, a convenience sample of 30 experienced ECEs was invited, via email,



to complete the same questionnaire administered to pre-service ECE students. These participants were selected because they were identified by college faculty and/or their supervisors as practitioners who were highly skilled at developing relationships with families. As well, they all had completed a minimum of a 2 year ECE diploma and worked at least 4 years in the field. Of the 30 experienced ECE participants who completed the questionnaire, 21 also completed semi-structured, recorded interviews. Like the pre-service student participants, the majority of these experienced ECEs were female (97%), born in Canada (70%), and spoke English as their first language (87%). They ranged in age from 24 to 47 years of age with a mean age of 38 years and 50% were parents.

### *Measures*

All participants completed a questionnaire that involved several open ended questions and rating

scales. The findings discussed in this article are related to two open ended questions: “What attracted you to the field of early childhood?” And “In your opinion, what qualities and characteristics make an early childhood educator most effective?” In addition, during the semi-structured interviews experienced ECEs were asked a variety of questions about their experiences working with families. Their descriptions of the experiences that helped them to develop their skills working with families are presented here.

## Findings

### *Attraction to the Field of Early Childhood*

The most common reason, among all groups of participants for being attracted to the field of early childhood was enjoyment of children. The least frequent reason provided was to support families. Only 3 respondents



(1 experienced ECE and 2 beginning students) mentioned families when describing their attraction to the field. Table 1 summarizes all the reasons given. A significantly higher proportion of experienced ECEs described a desire to make a difference in children's lives when compared to beginning students.

**Table 1: Attraction to the Field of Early Childhood**

*Question: What attracted you to the field of early childhood?*

Reason for Attraction	Beginning Students (N =202)	Experienced ECEs (N =30)
Enjoyment of children	60%	57%
Previous experience	32%	27%
To make a difference*	23%	40%
Career related	22%	27%
Use skills	4%	7%
Learn parenting	4%	3%
Told good with kids	3%	3%
To support families	1%	3%

**Qualities of an Effective ECE**

The most commonly cited characteristic or quality of an effective ECE was compassion. Table 2 summarizes all the characteristics and qualities described by all participants. Experienced ECEs were more likely to describe communication skills, knowledge, an open mind, respect for others, organizational skills, ability to work as a team member and being self-aware when compared to beginning students (see bolded items in Table 2).

**Table 2: Qualities or Characteristics of an Effective ECE**

*Question: In your opinion, what qualities and characteristics make an early childhood educator most effective?*

Qualities of an Effective ECE	Beginning Students (N =190)	Experienced ECEs (N =30)
Compassion	57%	60%
Enthusiasm	49%	60%
Patience	47%	33%
Communication Skills	27%	53%
Knowledge	21%	60%
An open mind	18%	37%
Respect for others	15%	40%
Dedication	13%	20%
Creativity	14%	23%
Flexibility	6%	30%
Honesty	5%	3%
Dependability	6%	10%
Confidence	6%	10%
Organization skills	5%	23%
Ability to work in a team	0.5%	30%
Self-awareness	1%	10%

**Experiences that Help to Develop Skills for Working with Families**

Experienced ECEs reported that their pre-service courses and related assignments helped provide a foundation to inform their work with families. Below are a couple of representative comments from the experienced ECEs:

*A whole course on family, and that really was great and that was dealing with active listening, and the empathy, and connecting...we did a lot of role-plays about different scenarios, and it really helped you feel like you were kind of in that moment and kind of were able to go experience it a little bit. ...seeing their [parents'] perspective in situations, e.g. they're tired, they're stressed.*

*I remember back when I went to school ....we did a program in our fourth semester where we had to interview a family. A parent and any topic of choice whether it be immigration or... anything. How you know you're a dual working family, how do you make this work? So we had to interview families. ....It was a little uncomfortable at times in the beginning because I wasn't sure how personal I should get. But once I got into it and realized that this mother who I was interviewing really wanted to share and really wanted to talk about her experiences, [I felt] really enlightened.*

Pre-service field placement experiences provided opportunities to understand and apply theory and skills for developing relationships with a wide range of families. Even ECEs who had worked in the field for many years described their field placements as



important learning experiences, and many described always trying to support current students in their development of the confidence and skills needed to work with families.

*Well in my placement I got a little taste of it, like I got a little opportunity; it really depends, some cooperating teachers did not facilitate it and did not model it and other ones modeled it and then encouraged me to at least greet parents.*

*I was always encouraged to speak to the families. I don't know how confident I was in doing so at the time or that I felt that I really had the knowledge to share with them. [I thought] "Why would they want to talk to me if they could talk to you? I don't want to bother them." But we say [to ECE students], "You know what? Every parent wants to hear something positive about their child so if you can tell them a little story about something fantastic they did in the block center this morning. They're going to want to hear it. Make sure you go in with something to say.*

Experienced ECEs also described the positive influences of more experienced staff and the importance of a centre philosophy and administrative support for involving families.

*When I first started working I had an amazing colleague who really role modeled to me exactly the way I want to communicate with families. Sometimes I would hesitate being fairly new, I would be afraid.....but she would guide me through, you know, "This is what we typically say, this is what," and so it just started from that. And then with each experience you have to deal with it and you learn. You*

*have to learn it. I'm still learning some of the stuff. I find I'm still learning.*

*[I am] really fortunate to work in a program that believes in that parent connection as part of their philosophy. It has been really fantastic.*

*I think when all is said and done, most of us have gone through the same program, Early Childhood program or a similar program. But then you know everyone kind of gets dispersed and goes into their own kind of field of teaching. And so it's always amazing to me when I meet up with people that I graduated with who are in programs who don't have the same philosophies, who say, "Oh no, no we would never let the parents come in because the kids would get too upset. It would set them off."*

But the most frequently described and perhaps the most powerful instructive experiences described were the daily encounters interacting and developing relationships with families themselves.

*I think that just comes with daily experience....asking more senior staff for advice..... But mostly, I think it comes from your experiences.*

*Time working. Back when I was in college there were a lot of programs about working with families, but until you're actually doing it it's hard to put that into practice and see what that's going to look like.*

*I think I really just didn't [develop skills] until I started working really. And I think that just over time different skills have*

*developed because I've worked with so many different kinds of families and many different situations that I think just sort of over time [learned].*

*Well I think honestly you learn a lot about how you should be in school, but I don't think it really actually makes sense until you're forced to be that way. ....[when I was a student] every year my goal was to communicate more with families, to work with families. But I don't feel like I ever succeeded while I was in school at that goal, whereas now that I've been working here for the past few years, I feel much more comfortable in that role because I have no choice.*

## Discussion

### **Motivation to work with families**

Not surprisingly, the majority of both experienced ECEs and pre-service ECE students surveyed in this study were attracted to the field of early childhood because of their enjoyment of children. In a job that involves long periods of time interacting with children, delighting in their company is valuable and vital. Parents want the people who care for and educate their children to enjoy spending time with their children. McGrath (2007) has argued that, for parents, the quality of the relationship between the child and their child care provider is often the most important aspect of childcare. In addition, commonly held perceptions of the early childhood field reinforce the image of ECEs working almost exclusively with children rather than a more ecologically based conceptualization that involves supporting families and communities (Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos & Castellino, 2002 & Powell, 1998). So there is work to be done to broaden popular conceptions of the work of

early childhood educators to include partnerships with families while at the same time celebrating the inspiration children provide to carry out that work.

It is interesting to note that the experienced ECEs were significantly more likely than the beginning ECE students surveyed to mention their desire to make a positive difference in the lives of children as part of their attraction to the field. Perhaps the desire to make a difference in children's lives is something that becomes more salient after one has gained experience working in the field. Maybe ECEs motivated by a desire to make a difference in children's lives are also motivated to see their role as encompassing the child's family and community, which might help to explain why these individuals were identified by college faculty members and their supervisors as highly skilled at engaging families. It is interesting to speculate about this difference in motivation and the only certain conclusion is that this finding seems to warrant further investigation.

#### ***Qualities and Characteristics for Work with Families***

While most participants surveyed in this study did not mention a desire to work with families when describing their attraction to the field they did describe important qualities and characteristics that are vital to developing and maintaining relationships with families. Compassion was the most frequently mentioned quality of an effective ECE described by all groups of participants. Certainly kindness, empathy, consideration and generosity (all were included in this response category) are qualities that go a long way in facilitating positive relationships with both children and adults. For experienced ECEs compassion, enthusiasm (positive energy, passion for their work) and knowledge were all identified in equal proportions (60% of the participants identified each

of these) and the ability to communicate was the second most frequently mentioned (53%) quality of an effective ECE. Parents have reported that they appreciate childcare staff who have strong communication skills, who show respect for them, are knowledgeable and who take a collaborative approach (Elicker, Noppe, Noppe & Fortner-Wood, 1997; Knoff & Swick, 2007). Experienced ECEs were more likely to describe these qualities (communication, respect, teamwork) than beginning students. Furthermore, these qualities appear to be very much related to the ECE's role in working with families as they are to their work with children. Perhaps, as the experienced ECEs explained during their interviews, it is through work experience with families themselves that these skills come to be more highly valued and developed.

#### ***Experiences that Develop Skills for Working with Families***

Experienced ECEs described a variety of experiences that helped them to develop and maintain relationships with families and engage in regular two-way communication. The majority said that their pre-service education and field placement experiences had set the foundation for these skills by providing them with relevant theory, exposure to diverse families and coaching and mentoring from experienced staff who supervised them during their field placement experiences. In addition, several described assignments that required them to approach and get to know families as instructive and valuable. The importance of a centre philosophy and administrators who value partnerships with families was also described and valued by several interviewees. There is a growing literature about the importance of the organizational context and culture in supporting family involvement in childcare (Brotherson, Summers, Bruns, & Sharp, 2008; Douglass, 2011).

This literature suggests that rather than looking solely at the training, experience or orientation of individual staff members to understand levels of family involvement, investigations need to examine the extent to which the organization and culture of a centre supports family involvement. Certainly the experienced ECEs in this study credited the family-centered organizational culture of their workplaces as a key factor in their success at engaging parents.

The overwhelming majority of participants, however, said that daily work experiences interacting and communicating with families was what supported them the most in learning the necessary skills and being motivated to approach families and exchange meaningful information about children regularly. While there is not a large academic literature on the extent to which paid, full time work experiences themselves provide the best opportunities for skill development within a profession, there is certainly a commonly held opinion that experience is often the best teacher. In this case, however, the context in which that experience is gained seems quite significant. As experienced ECEs pointed out, work experience in settings that don't actively support collaboration with families may well result in the development of a very different approach and corresponding set of skills. Nevertheless, assuming that the majority of experienced ECEs were referring to work experience in settings that actively encourage partnerships with families, it is interesting to speculate why work experience was seen as so valuable for the development of skills related to working with families. Maybe the necessity of experience is related to ECEs' initial attraction to the field of early childhood. Perhaps the excitement and appeal of working with children motivates

pre-service ECE students to focus their energy and attention on developing child related skills (e.g. curriculum planning, relationship development, ensuring health and safety) and that although skills related to working with families are part of their pre-service curriculum they are sort of eclipsed by students' attraction to children. In addition, it seems quite reasonable to speculate that pre-service students might not yet appreciate the interconnectedness of children, families and communities. Instead, they might be more likely to conceptualize childcare as one in a series of unconnected environments the child moves through in a linear fashion, sort of like a baton in a relay race (a family member hands off the child to a staff person at the childcare centre who later hands the child to another centre staff or to school staff who later hands the child back to a parent or family member). If this is the case, then it speaks to the importance of introducing the bio-ecological framework of human development early in the pre-service ECE curriculum and embedding all learning in the context of systems theory to help students appreciate that in order to be most effective in their interactions with the children they must engage families and understand and connect with communities.

### Study Limitations

This study had several limitations. The first involves the sample of pre-service ECE students being drawn from a single college program and possibly not representing the larger population of ECE students. However, the demographics of this sample were similar to those of students at other colleges in the region and this region grants more than 50% of the ECE diplomas awarded in the province annually (Colleges Ontario, 2012). So, while the sample might not represent all ECE students in Canada it represents a significant proportion of ECE diploma students in Ontario. The

second limitation involves the sample of experienced ECEs. These participants were not selected at random, but deliberately chosen because they had been identified by their supervisors and/or college faculty members as effective at working with families. Still, the demographics of this experienced ECE sample were very similar to the national sample of 3,480 early childhood practitioners surveyed by the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (2013) for their survey on wages and working conditions in centre-based early childhood education and care in Canada. So, they appear to be somewhat representative of ECE practitioners in Canada or at least practitioners who respond to surveys related to their profession. Finally, the cross sectional design of this investigation precludes any conclusions about changes over the course of training or work experience. It is entirely possible that the beginning students were different in significant ways from the experienced ECEs and the differences between the groups were not related to training and work experience but to other pre-existing factors.

### Implications for Practice

Despite these limitations, this study does provide insight into the motivations of those attracted to the field of early childhood and the qualities and characteristics they perceive as important for effectiveness within their profession. In addition, this investigation provides an indication of some of the activities and experiences that have helped some ECE practitioners further develop and refine their skills engaging families in order to provide responsive, stimulating and sensitive care to children. Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of individuals working in early childhood settings to effectively meet the needs of young children (Best Start Expert Panel

on Early Learning, 2007). Although it appears that most ECEs are not initially attracted to the field by a desire to work with families, the qualities and skills they value include the same skills parents value in their children's child care providers. These include empathy, kindness, consideration, enthusiasm, communication skills and knowledge - all of which are important in establishing ongoing communication and relationships with families (Elicker, Noppe, Noppe & Fortner-Wood, 1997; Knoff & Swick, 2007). ECE's primary motivation appears to be their desire to work with children. To be effective in this endeavour they must view development as something that occurs in multiple contexts. The more information shared between these "worlds of childhood" the greater the potential for adults to be responsive to children's needs. It is incumbent on adults to bridge these worlds. Daily exchanges of information about individual children not only help families and child care providers provide sensitive, supportive and stimulating care to children but also provide these adults with opportunities to better understand each other's preferences, priorities and values. Experienced ECEs in this study understood the importance of a team approach and reflected this in the value they placed not only on team work but also on having an open mind, being flexible and showing respect for others. Developing the confidence and skill to approach families and establish regular two-way communication appears to require a solid theoretical and practical foundation. This foundation is often part of pre-service training and provides the impetus to engage families. In addition, it is essential that workplaces support family involvement both philosophically and practically (Douglass, 2011). Supportive mentors and colleagues and daily experience with a wide variety of families help to refine practice, build knowledge and confidence, and

reinforce a commitment to supporting children's development and well-being in the context of their larger worlds.

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FOCUS

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**The Political and Professional  
Child Care Landscape in Canada  
What's Changing,  
What's Not?**



## WHAT'S CHANGING, WHAT'S NOT?

# From Tragedy to Trajectory

## Ontario's Changing Landscape in Child Care Regulations

by Marni Flaherty

Today, I strongly believe that we find ourselves in an important moment – a moment of great opportunity, a milestone. And I believe that what we do now, together, can change the face of child and youth services in our province, and perhaps in our country, forever. Today, child care faces many challenges: it is underfunded, fragmented and, for the most part, operating in silos.

Events in the last few months have brought these challenges to a head. This past summer several tragedies made headlines in our cities and towns, in Ontario and across the country.

- A two-year-old found dead in an illegal home daycare setting with 27 children in one house.
- The Coroner's Recommendations after the inquest into the 2010 drowning death of a toddler in Ottawa in a backyard where 31 people were present.
- The poisoning of two children by their caregiver in Waterloo.
- The tragic death of a child left in a car in the Greater Toronto Area by a grandmother who was caring for her grandchild. A grandmother who was asked at the last minute to care for the child because of the child care arrangement that the parents had were unreliable.

These terrible incidents tragically provided a platform to discuss the issues facing child care. Darkly, it was a kind of “perfect storm” of avoidable deaths that catapulted these issues into the media, and by extension, into public conversation.

These tragedies pushed the leaders in child care to “step up” – to articulate the challenges facing child care. We, the leaders of child

care organizations across the province and the country, know the issues best. It was our duty to clearly outline the issues in a collaborative, solution-focused approach.

For years it had been difficult, if not impossible, to get the media interested in the problems in unregulated child care. It is a tangled and confusing area for parents, operators and journalists. But this past summer, because of the terrible events that unfolded, journalists became engaged in the stories and they wanted answers.

Of course, we, early childhood educators and administrator, had been working on these issues for years and were ready to clearly outline the need for better regulation, better funding and better organization in child care in Canada. We had to come together to prepare a response for the media and make sure our key messages about basic health and safety for children and the need for regulation were heard.

Various organizations, both federal and provincial, including the Coalition for Better Child Care, Home Child Care Association of Ontario and the Quality Early Learning Network came together to forge a clear, single response to the events of the summer: We have to strengthen our commitment for our youngest children. In this case, accountability meant stepping forward.

Accountability meant speaking with one clear, strong voice. And giving one, clear message: We believe that all home child care in Ontario should be regulated. Period. The current situation is unacceptable.

Did you know, for example, that there are more regulations in running a restaurant, bass fishing in our lakes or operating a dog kennel, than there are for in-home child care? We have two systems in Ontario for home child care. We have a regulated system and an unregulated system. We believe there should be one system.

We are not referring to relatives or friends caring for each others children. We're referring to people running businesses out of their homes, charging fees for child care and operating businesses without regulations of any kind.

The need for change is obvious. High quality programs and services can have an extraordinary and long-lasting impact on children's learning and development. Having a provincial policy statement will help to provide quality across settings, guide educator practice, facilitate communication with parents and families, and increase continuity between early years' settings and elementary school experiences.

Home-based child care is also an important segment of the child care sector, and represents an area that could further expand



child care options for parents, many of which prefer to have their child cared for in a home setting.

In Ontario, child care was moved under the Ministry of Education. We have a “schools first policy” – which invests into community child care and moves the program into local schools. Four and five-year-old children are now full time in school. Schools are open at 7 in the morning and close by 6 at night.

We are at a time of transformational change – change that supports the well-being, health and safety, and learning during the early years. The provincial government has launched an extensive revision of the current system under the banner, “Transforming Ontario’s Child Care and Early Years System: A Framework for the Future: New Legislation.” On December 3, 2013 the government introduced *Bill 143, the Child Care Modernization Act 2013* that if passed, would amend three *Acts*. The proposed legislation would repeal and replace the *Day Nurseries Act with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013* – a new, modernized legislative framework that would govern the provision of child care and early years programs and services.

### Key features of the new vision

- An increasingly accessible and integrated system that is responsive and adaptable;
- High-quality programs that contribute to healthy child development which are centred around a view of children as competent, capable and curious and delivered by knowledgeable Early Childhood Educators (ECEs);
- Choice and convenience for families by supporting a range of quality service options;
- A sustainable partnership between the Province and municipal service system managers, supporting collaboration with school boards, community agencies and other partners;
- A licensing framework for child care that is simplified, and flexible; and
- A suite of measures to support accountability and transparency.

What does that mean for us in child care? It means we must respond to discussion papers, stay focused on the quality, and recognize where we fit. I am optimistic that change will come, but it would be disingenuous to say I am not worried. Here are some of the challenges:

- Most of us are entrenched in the details, getting caught up in what is comfortable to talk about.
- Some of us are fixated on perfection and not excellence. Therefore, this legislation is perceived as “not good enough.”
- Ontario has licensed child care for only 20 per cent of preschool children. Therefore 80 per cent of the care is unregulated and under the radar. A lot of folks in Ontario would like to keep things that way.

- Advocates are calling for quality, evidenced-based practice in licensed care. Registered Early Childhood Educators are busy with the children. Parents are busy working. And the reality is that children are mostly cared for in unregulated settings.
- The proposed new legislation is one huge step forward – not perfect – but much better than what we had.
- In the political arena, we need all parties to support the passing of the legislation. That could be tough.

Ontario is taking early childhood programs and services and turning them on their side. Community organizations are working alongside municipalities, school boards and other services within their communities and trying to make sense of the change.

It is time for us to change. I believe that we have a unique opportunity to change the landscape of child care in Ontario today. We believe that we must modernize to best serve the needs and the desires of families. We need some fundamental changes:

- Regulations must apply to all home child care.
- The *Day Nurseries Act* must change to suit our modern age.
- We need a province-wide public education campaign clearly promoting the importance of licensed programs.
- This new system must be integrated with other supports such as recreation, public health, library and schools.

To quote Peter Frampton, executive director of the Learning Enrichment Foundation and member of the Quality Early Learning Network, “Looking at the big picture, child care is not just about day care, but has a significant impact on many areas of community and provincial health. It’s about strategically reaching children in their critical early years, which prepares them for development in school and as far as into the working world, along with supporting children’s healthier lives and well being. It also supports parents and communities, and their ability to participate in the workforce.”

Together we can do this. Together, we are poised to lead the charge. Together we can lead Ontario and the rest of Canada into a new age of safe, regulated, high-quality child care for our most important resource – our children.

Marni Flaherty is the C.E.O. of Today’s Family Early Learning and Child Care in Hamilton and Burlington. She is a recipient of the Ontario Premiers Award for her work and dedication in the social services sector and the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in education. Marni is known locally, provincially and nationally for her commitment to early learning and child care.

Marni is an active participant in numerous community initiatives designed to improve the lives of children. Her many professional and voluntary community activities include: board president of the Home Child Care Association of Ontario (HCCAO), board member of the Canadian Child Care Federation, co-chair of the Parent and Family Engagement Committee, Hamilton Best Start Network, member of the Early Years Community Steering Plan City of Hamilton, member of the Best Start Network, member of the Ontario Early Years Centres Provincial Network, and member of the Quality Early Learning Network. Marni lives in the Hamilton community with her husband Paul Benedetti and three wonderful children James, Matthew and Ella.



## WHAT'S CHANGING, WHAT'S NOT?

# The \$10/Day Child Care Plan for British Columbia

## A plan that belongs to the community

by Emily Mliczko

In April 2011, in partnership with the Child Care Advocates of BC, the Early Childhood Educators of BC produced *The Community Plan for a System of Integrated Early Care and Learning*, otherwise known as the **\$10/Day Child Care Plan**. We feel that this is the solution to solve BC's child care crisis.

The Plan builds on research demonstrating that public spending on the early years is a wise social and economic investment and that quality child care IS early learning. It is a "made in BC" solution that honours children's and families' rights to quality early care and learning, and offers a concrete and innovative way forward. It will:

- Cap parents' fees at \$10/day for full-time care, \$7/day for part-time care and make it free for families with annual incomes under \$40,000;
- Create quality child care spaces for every child whose family wants or needs it;
- Increase early childhood educators' wages to an hourly average wage of \$25/hr;
- Enhance early childhood educators' education and credentials; and,
- Improve the quality of early care and learning through inclusive, play-based programming.

While the design and delivery of systems of early care and learning are provincial responsibilities, both provincial and



federal governments have the obligation to honour their commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to accessible, quality early care and learning.

It is fair to say that no one could have imagined the momentum that the \$10/Day Child Care in BC has gained since its conception, and indeed has amazed and humbled us. The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia are often asked – Why is there such strong momentum around the Plan?

Developed from years of research, studies, and a large scale community consultation, the Plan addresses issues facing BC's child care crisis; high fees, low wages, and not enough quality licensed spaces. We recognized this is a clear vision that we did not have until now. What makes it so unique is the community can see itself in it and we have seen unprecedented support from families, aunts, uncles, grandparents, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), elected officials, businesses, community programs and services.

Every day we hear stories of the many individuals, organizations and groups who are educating about the need for the \$10/Day Child Care Plan. Like the people involved, their ideas are creative and unique. Their energy is inspiring



and adds to the fact this is truly a community plan, belonging to the community. Examples of the innovation can be seen across BC. A full cohort of ECE students from Langara College in Vancouver has found a variety of innovative ways to actively promote the \$10/Day Plan. On National Child Day, they organized an event that captured the rights of the child, engaging the attendees about their favorite childhood memories and shared information regarding the Plan. They captured close to 500 signatures on postcards that were delivered to MLAs and BC's provincial leader and the official opposition leader. In December, they organized an enthusiastic Christmas caroling event. The students were seen and heard on street corners and through Vancouver's transit system. They took time engaging and educating all who stopped to listen to them.



One Langara student, Lindsay Lichty, reported after the caroling event, "We were able to reach the public in a wonderful way. The majority of the group stood singing, while others approached people walking by, and those that had stopped to listen to us sing. It was a wonderful opportunity to inform the public [about the Plan], and to celebrate joy! We sang with open hearts, having not had the chance to rehearse, ever, we sang with the gusto of childhood, and of pure joy. We had time to talk to people, to educate them, and hopefully, they will tell this story." The Langara students continue to make exciting plans for *May is Child Care Month*, which we will be announcing soon.

Others, like Sue Fraser and Mary Dolan, both ECEBC honorary life time members, continue to engage their own respective communities. Sue has recently joined a federal political party to bring child care issues to the table and Mary continuously educates elected officials in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island. Daily, members of the Early Care and Learning advisory committee are called to do presentations that now near 300 across BC. In the past year there has been 100 media articles/ interviews highlighting the Plan; radio, print and TV. Katherine Charbonneau, from Dawson Creek, North East BC, is using Twitter and Facebook to get the message out. The Victoria ECEBC local branch is planning a variety of ways to reach the public and bring attention to our capitol city. Many parents are telling their stories of the daily challenges they face to find

affordable high quality child care, ECEs are sharing their experiences about leaving this field they love because they cannot afford to pay for the same service they are providing. Grandparents are talking about the struggles they see their own children facing in the current fiscal climate. Many other ECEs have provided information to their families in newsletters, parent boards and information nights. Although these are only a few glimpses of the energy surrounding the Plan, it highlights how many are feeling connected to it. It has been humbling and amazing to see so many from across the province bring the Plan to the public's attention.

The Plan has been enthusiastically endorsed by community members, municipalities, school boards, business and labour, community organizations, and academics, representing over 1.6 million individuals. The endorsement page can be viewed at <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/endorse-the-plan/organizational-support/>. By the end of January 2014, 26 municipalities, 19 boards of education, 26 labour organizations, along with hundreds of community associations, child care programs, academics, Boards of Trade and businesses have lent their support for the \$10/Day Child Care Plan. Together this represents over 1.6 million British Columbians. Individuals can also endorse the Plan and leave comments on the page.

Here is a summary of some of the comments, but they all can be viewed at <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/endorse-the-plan/>.



- *Constantly choosing between healthier food choices and paying for daycare fees is not a choice people should have to make.* Anonymous, Langley
- *I fully support the \$10.00 a day daycare plan; let's put our children and our future first. Let's pay our childcare workers wages that they actually deserve for doing one of the most important jobs for your children. Please help me support this very good cause.* Kelly, Surrey
- *I have been on both sides of the fence now. I have worked for poor wages with ECE and haven't been able to afford to put my own child into care due to costs. I know of other families that simply cannot afford to have a child in care and work. It is unacceptable and it needs fixing.* Elana, Malahat
- *I fully support this. As a mom of 2 wanting to go back to work with the cost of child care I cannot!* Kathleen, Kamloops
- *Based on the provided research and documentation, the ripple effect on workers and the economy from implementing this plan would be a massive improvement.* James, Victoria
- *I don't have kids, but I fully support affordable childcare. Any program that helps the working poor pays dividends for decades into the future.* Freya, Victoria

We have learned through this process that as early childhood educators we have the capacity to build our own movement and

to educate the community about the current crisis and see the \$10/Day Child Care Plan as a solution. We are and continue to be successful because as ECEs we already have strong skills in networking and communication. We see the reality facing families and those who have chosen Early Care and Learning as a career is real and we can tell these stories. Without a public child care system the crisis won't change and this is why there has been such energy to the proposed Plan. It is a concrete, innovative and ambitious plan that has been accepted as solution here is British Columbia.

Emily Mlieczko is a licensed Early Childhood Educator and has been in the field for 21 years with citations in both Special Needs and First Nations Environments in Early Childhood Settings.

Throughout her career she has been engaged at the community and provincial level in a number of different projects and events highlighting the specialty of the ECE sector.

In May 2010, Emily accepted the position of Executive Director of the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) and relocated her two teenage boys to Vancouver from the small coastal community of Prince Rupert.

Since that time, Emily has been engaged in strengthening and building connections and educating the community regarding the value of Early Care and Learning. She has also expanded current ECEBC programs such as Let's Talk about Touching and Best Choices: An Ethical Journey, to ensure provision of education opportunities for the ECE sector.

Emily is actively engaged with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) and ECEBC on the joint project, "A Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC", or better known as the "\$10/Day Child Care Plan." This Plan is the potential solution to the childcare crisis in BC.

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## WHAT'S CHANGING, WHAT'S NOT?

# Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

by Pat Wege

Around five years ago, a friend and I were on a bus tour of supposedly haunted buildings in Winnipeg. One of the other passengers asked the tour leader what her background was. She replied that jobs were scarce in the field in which she had trained and so she was working in day care. “It’s not as though anyone can’t do that” she continued. Several passengers snickered. I gasped, my blood pressure rose, and I clenched my teeth. Surely she knew of the abundant research that connects caregiver qualifications and quality, that the early years set the foundation for lifelong success and that working effectively with young children is a skill that requires specialized knowledge! ANYONE cannot do it, my mind screamed! Child care is a profession! We have standards!

But then I remembered hearing Directors talk about how hard it is to hire staff with the combination of education, skills, experience, and attitudes they need. Some have said they often have no choice other than to hire whoever they can find willing to work for what they can afford to pay. There is evidence they are right. Manitoba’s Office of the Auditor General Report, January 2013 says that, “19 per cent of centres and nursery schools were not complying with the trained staff standards and the Department (Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care) had exempted 11 per cent of the facilities from the requirement because they had staff plans in place to help them work toward meeting them.”

## Staff training and qualifications

In 1983, Manitoba was one of the first provinces in Canada to introduce regulations for staff qualifications, along with ratio’s and maximum group sizes. This has been called the “iron triangle” for quality early learning and child care. More than 3000 men and women have now been classified as ECE IIs or IIIs by the Province of Manitoba, yet 31 per cent of licensed centres cannot hire the ECEs they need to meet trained staff requirements. Are there not enough graduates, or is the real problem that many ECEs have left licensed child care for greener pastures? Although recruit back, retention strategies, and training supports have been introduced, the shortage of available ECEs not only continues, but has become normalized in our industry.

There is now far more research, recognition, and respect for the importance of the early years. Ironically, many new quality enhancement initiatives have been introduced into licensed child care but requiring every licensed facility to actually have trained educators is not one of them. My conscience asks the question *is this right?* Child care centres continue to operate without enough ECEs, are allowed to expand, and new facilities are being licensed, further increasing the shortage. A centre is now eligible for a regular license with an approved staffing plan which means the shortage is mostly invisible to parents and government is not under any pressure to address the reasons why there aren’t enough ECEs – like compensation, for example. The burden of responsibility is carried by the centre Director left to hire staff with lower qualifications, but responsible for ensuring the centre complies with all other standards for health, safety, learning, and well-being of children.

## What about wages?

I remember the days when the workforce thought that the training requirements would bring fair wages, and respect for child care as a profession. Thirty one years later, although there have been many steps forward including a variety of wage enhancement initiatives that have come and gone, operating revenue from parent fees and operating grants still fall short of that required by most child care centres to pay what we know to be fair wages. The mean gross hourly wages in 2012 for program staff in Manitoba was \$16.00 an hour. While up from \$13.28 in 1998, wages are still the heart of the recruitment and retention problem. (*You Bet We Still Care, 2012*) MCCAs research-based Market Competitive Salary Guideline Scales for Early Learning and Child Care Centres, 2013/14 recommends an ECE that works primarily with children should earn \$17.39 to start ranging to \$21.74 for someone fully proficient, usually reflective of someone with 4 years’ experience. In 2009, the province re-introduced another salary top initiative in the form of low-wage adjustment fund (WAF) to increase wages to at least \$15.50 an





hour for ECEs and to \$12.25 per hour for a Child Care Assistant (CCA) in ECE training. Those eligible were elated; those left out, furious.

In 2012, the province announced there would be two consecutive years of new funding. The increases to parent fees and operating grants were high enough to make a difference on the revenue side of a budget. They also announced a commitment to introduce their own province-wide wage scale. That was followed by a consultation on wages and working conditions, and then another consultation on child care as a system in 2013. The child care workforce is expecting an action plan to address workforce issues. There is additional pressure to address wages because school divisions are hiring ECEs for preschool programs and as Educational Assistants. A majority offer a wage range higher than child care can afford.

### Early childhood education – the first tier

Child care is under enormous pressure to meet expectations as the first tier of education. Whether they have the training, resources, or support, everyone is expected to know more and do more, right from the newest CCA, to management, to parents who volunteer on the board of directors, to family child care providers. The workforce is more diverse, with many newcomers as well as men now part of the team. The more government invests in child care, the more they are looking for and measuring outcomes. Centres are required to develop curriculum statements to ensure an enriched learning environment. Emergent curriculum has replaced theme based planning. The daily program includes lots of outdoor time, so children can enjoy learning in a natural play environment. Facilities are including children with additional support needs. Child care centres have grown in size and some now have hundreds of spaces, often purpose-built, and more than half now co-located in a school. School divisions are introducing their own pre-school programs, exploring the feasibility of full day-K, and understand that the availability of child care in the school is essential to family well-being.

Several other provinces have developed provincial policy frameworks on early child development which include plans to integrate child care and education. Manitoba has not yet made a similar commitment and it sometimes feels like we are stuck while others are moving ahead. Our position as a leader is doubtful when the next pan-Canadian Early Childhood Education Index is released in 2015. We look forward to the next plan for early learning and child care, and have recommended it give priority to workforce issues. In addition, the following must be addressed:

- the enormous need for more licensed child care spaces for all age groups, inclusive of extended hour, and flexible services;
- growing parental concern about the safety and wellbeing of children that attend in home child care that is not licensed;

- parents on child care centre boards that feel unqualified and overburdened with the risks and responsibility of governance;
- the need to upgrade competency standards, training requirements, classification system, and the need for in-service time and professional development funding;
- the need for provincial leadership and facilitated coordination, communication, collaboration in areas of mutual concern between school divisions and child care programs;
- the need for a coherent, inter-sectoral, coordinated provincial policy framework for early child development that includes child care.

### Manitoba Moving Forward

*Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force, but through persistence. – Ovid*

I am optimistic that we will continue to move forward in a positive direction. We have plenty of experience identifying and introducing important and successful new initiatives to strengthen and enhance our system. I am proud that the Manitoba Child Care Association has been at the forefront, identifying issues and needs, calling for change, sharing a vision, lobbying for better on behalf of our members. For example, in 2010, the Government of Manitoba introduced a registered pension plan and long term service recognition retirement benefit for full and part time employees in not for profit centres. Licensed home based family and group child care providers have access to a matching RRSP plan and also for the long-term service recognition retirement benefit. MCCA had lobbied for a pension plan for years, so this was a great step forward.

In early 2000, Manitoba introduced a highly successful workplace training program to help CCAs with two years of experience become an ECE. The CCA spends two days a week in school while continuing to receive a full time salary because the province provides a staff replacement grant to cover substitute costs. The student qualifies for a raise as a CCA in ECE training, and earns an ECE diploma in two years. Family Child Care Providers are also eligible. There is a Tuition Support Grant for students enrolled in an approved full time two-year ECE II program, and an Annual Training Grant for ECE IIs upgrading to an ECE III, and CCAs or FCCPs upgrading to an ECE II.

Here are some examples of other new initiatives that have had a positive impact on ELCC in Manitoba:

- two consecutive long range plans announced by government articulated a commitment, identified priorities, established goals, and ensured steady progress;
- continued provincial operating grants, available for not for profit child care centres and for licensed family child care





providers, and a maximum fee for funded facilities help keep parent fees as low as possible;

- a centralized online waitlist provides a one stop shop for parents to register for a space, and information that will help plan for expansion;
- quality enhancements include the first legislated child care safety charter in Canada, a 40 hour introductory course for CCAs and FCCPs, the low wage adjustment grant, a curriculum framework that helps infant, preschool and nursery school staff develop, describe, and enhance their curriculum;
- enhanced mentoring and training for the inclusion of children with additional support needs;
- an Early Learning and Child Care Capital Fund, which also supports the use of surplus school space for child care. More than half of child care centres are now co-located in a school;
- regular increases to the provincial budget for child care allows existing initiatives to continue and support new commitments.

**Pleas for national leadership on child care fall on deaf ears**

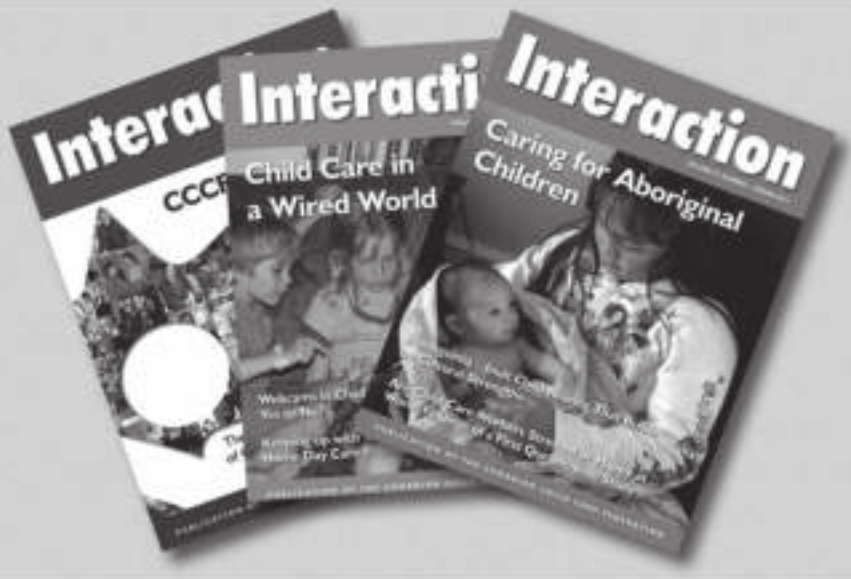
Early learning and child care doesn't move forward by itself. We don't yet have the same public support and political clout as

education and health care. The current federal government has completely turned its back on child care and provides ample evidence that nothing will happen without political buy in. Parents that can't find a child care space should be the primary advocates, but are consumed with balancing work and family so find care somewhere and get on with their busy lives. Some industries can afford to hire professional lobbyists to promote their cause with government. Child care is not one of them. More recently, academics, researchers, and foundations have become far more active in adding their voices to help those national organizations that have been weakened due to funding cuts at the federal level (Canadian Child Care Federation) or gone entirely (Child Care Human Resources Sector Council). One of Manitoba's greatest strengths is that a majority of our child care workforce are members of MCCA and many are also volunteers on our committees and in their regions. That gives our organization the history, experience, expertise, and financial stability to serve as the voice of early learning and child care, identify the problems, monitor the trends, propose solutions, and keep moving the early learning and system forward in a positive direction.

Pat Wege has worked in early learning and child care since 1976. She has been the executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association since 1997, and is proud of our history and optimistic about the future.

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WHAT'S CHANGING, WHAT'S NOT?

# Early Childhood Educators in Prince Edward Island Finally Being at Home

***Prince Edward Island Preschool Excellence Initiative brings professional recognition, feeling valued by the community, policy makers and other early years professionals***

**by Sonya Hooper**

An Early Childhood Educator, when asked what they felt was the most significant change to the early childhood sector since the introduction of the Prince Edward Island Preschool Excellence Initiative, said “Professional recognition, and feeling valued by the community, policy makers and other early years professionals”. The PEI Preschool Excellence Initiative (PEIPEI) was announced by Premier Ghiz in May of 2010. The PEIPEI committed to transition the early childhood sector into an early learning and child care system.

The Early Childhood Development Association (ECDA) of PEI is a provincial non-profit organization committed to promoting and supporting quality early learning and childcare programs and services for PEI children. The organization was, and continues to be, pivotal in moving quality agendas forward in PEI, including the legislation to license, regulate, and monitor early childhood centres; and the development and implementation of the PEI Preschool Excellence Initiative. This article was prepared as a reflection on the transformations within the PEI early learning and child care system through informal dialogue with ECDA volunteers and members.

Since 2000 there have been significant changes to the education, early learning and child care landscape across PEI including:

- 2000: The introduction of kindergarten as a public-funded system delivered within the regulated early learning and child care system.
- 2006: Excellence in Education: A Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement was released.
- 2008: A new Provincial Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was formed.
- 2008 It was announced in the Throne Speech that kindergarten would shift to a public school delivery model in September.
- 2009 The Public Kindergarten Commissionaire’s report stated that school based kindergarten would begin in September 2010 and that there be an in-depth review of early learning and child care.
- 2010 Kindergarten transitioned to a public school delivery model, with more than 120 educated and trained ECE’s eligible to apply for these teaching positions.
- 2010 The Early Years Report: An investment in the Island’s future was released.
- 2010 The Prince Edward Island Preschool Excellence Initiative was launched.

Decisions to make changes to PEI’s education and early learning and child care (ELCC) sectors were informed by strong PEI research; however, the critical tipping point for the ELCC sector was the announcement of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This created an immediate shift in the landscape of the early childhood sector. The announcement was met with mixed enthusiasm and cautious excitement. The simple marriage of the titles under one department provided the professional promotion and public recognition that the ELCC sector sought for decades. Soon after the pronouncement of the new provincial department, there came the decision that kindergarten would shift from a publicly-funded, community-based kindergarten program, to a public school delivery. The decision caused confusion within the ELCC community, as they anticipated it would result in a huge loss of funding and human resources for the early childhood programs.

In the wake of this shift, the PEI early childhood sector struggled to retain well-trained and experienced educators. A human resource study completed in PEI, ‘For Our Educators’ (2002) reported little more than 50% of those working in the sector were doing so with a diploma in early childhood education. Although the professional recognition and advancement was something to be celebrated, the loss of more than 100 early childhood educators into public kindergarten teaching positions left the early childhood community in a legitimate human resources crisis.

Recognizing the potential chaos that could result from these significant system changes, the ECDA called on the province to



commence a comprehensive impact study and full review of the early childhood system; focusing mainly on financial and human resource impacts. The ECDA suggested that action on known issues be initiated immediately. These included: funding access for training opportunities for untrained workers in the sector; legislation to address both the standards of the sector and the certification of educators; and a plan to develop a renewed funding formula to create a comprehensive and affordable early childhood education system.

Following intensive review, and the release of The Early Years Report (2010), the PEI Preschool Excellence Initiative was created. The PEIPEI outlined PEI government's commitment to increase funding to the early childhood sector by 63%, from \$5.35 to \$8.7 million (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2010).

## So What?

I am often asked, "What is the biggest change in PEI's ELCC system?". Although funding has increased significantly, wages and working conditions have improved greatly, and the enhanced policy is phenomenal, it would have to be the feeling of belonging! Being nestled within Education and Early Childhood Development has been described by some as 'finally being at home', where everyone speaks the same language. At last, there is a general consensus that the work within early learning and child care centres is teaching, and the popular belief is that children learn important skills for life through their experiences within early years centres. The shift from child care being a social service to early learning and child care being an integral component of education has catapulted the calibre of respect and recognition shown toward the sector and those who work within it; most educators will report there is no longer a need to justify what it is they do at work. The conversations with the community, with policy makers, and with families start from a place of understanding and recognition toward the value of learning in the early years.

To demonstrate the level of respect afforded to the work within the early years and the commitment to expanding this pedagogical approach, a recent example comes to mind. In a motion passed unanimously in the PEI Legislative Assembly last year on National Child Day, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Alan McIsaac introduced Motion #31, "Working Together to Ensure Play Remains in Early Learning and Child Care Programs and Kindergarten Classrooms and Explored in Primary Grades" (PEI Legislative Assembly, 2013). The motion ensures that play remains the main pedagogical approach to curriculum delivery in the early years. The motion was unanimously supported and was a great opportunity to highlight the importance of play in the Early Years and Primary Grades.

Other high-profile changes to the PEI early childhood sector include:

- Fully funded entry level Early Childhood Care and Education training was provided to 160 students. This included three-30 hour courses: Child Development, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, and Guidance.
- Fully funded training for those working in regulated centres without a credential. This winter, there are more than 70 educators completing their certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education.
- A salary scale and increased employment benefits. *For Our Educators* (2002) indicated an median hourly wage in PEI for certified early childhood educator working with children 0-4 years of age was \$8.00, today it is \$16.00 and a director rings in at \$21.00 an hour.
- Regulated parent fees within Early Years Centres.
- An increased number of regulated infant child care spaces through Early Years Centres.
- A provincial Early Learning and Child Care Registry, PEI's on-line centralized waiting list for regulated early learning and child care programs.
- Increased annual funding support to the Early Childhood Development Association of PEI to continue to support early childhood educators in delivering quality programs and services.
- The Supervisor Network, an open door group of Directors/Supervisors that meet monthly to discuss matters of interest to them in their role as centre leader.
- The ECDA supported the sector to incorporate three work day closures to attend provincial professional development training. More than 88% of Island centres participate and have incorporated professional development closure policies into their centre policies.
- A heightened presence in media on the value of play as a tool for learning. The ECDA, with funding support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, launched the Start with Play campaign. The campaign draws the community's attention to play as a tool for learning and to early childhood educators as the certified professionals who establish the building blocks for children to learn skills for life.
- The implementation of the PEI Early Learning Framework: A Curriculum Document of PEI.
- Parent Advisory Committees give families the opportunity to further quality and expand learning opportunities in their child's early years centre.

For more details, view the available supporting documents at <http://www.gov.pe.ca/eccd/earlychildhood>.

## What's Next?

Change is never easy and comes with much disorder and confusion before settling into the newly defined norms and system order. Changes of this magnitude are never accomplished individually, and these changes are no exception. Leaders within the provincial government, within the sector, and within



local early childhood organizations who believe and understand the urgency for creating and sustaining a solid early years infrastructure, provide the foundation for these changes. The passion and desire to create a system that is in the best interest of PEI's children, has been, and continues to be fuelled by trusting relationships and long-standing successful partnerships. Finally, a clearly articulated vision intended to guide our relationships with young children adopted by the province kept everyone involved focused on the end goal:

*"Children in PEI are healthy and happy, curious and creative, playful and joyous. They are loved and respected, and are safe and secure in their families, homes and communities. Children are our collective responsibility. They are valued for who they are today, and as the future parents and leaders of tomorrow."*  
(Flanagan, 2010)

Fortunately, the relationships and partnerships of the key stakeholders in PEI's ELCC system continue to thrive and regular space and time is provided to each other to continue to discuss the systems successes and challenges. The on-going dialogue is consistently seeking appropriate goals for the system while expanding partnerships and possibilities all in the best interest of PEI's children. As everyone settles in and adjusts to new policy, professional supports, and funding structures, the PEI early childhood sector is expecting new legislation to be enacted this spring to consolidate the advances to the infrastructure. PEI expects legislation, through the *Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulations*, will uphold these changes and increase standards of practice.

Going forward, the ongoing priority remains in ensuring the sustained recognition of early childhood pedagogy and practices. As the sector relishes in the newly found appreciation and recognition, campaigns such as Start with Play, and Motion #31 emphasise the importance of sustaining early childhood pedagogy and 2 practices within early childhood and the potential

of expanding into primary grades. While we continue to evolve and professionalize our practices, we must also be attentive to maintain our pedagogy and values as early childhood educators.

Sonya Hooper is an educator, advocate, professional speaker, and in 2003 filled the inaugural position of executive director with the Early Childhood Development Association (ECDA) of PEI. She began her education in early childhood at Holland College in Prince Edward Island, where she obtained her diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education in 1990. In 2012, she took the next step in her education by completing a Masters Degree in Education.

Throughout her years within the regulated sector, Sonya has worn many hats, including kindergarten teacher, special needs assistant, centre director, and centre owner/operator. She has been involved with the ECDA of PEI since her early years in the sector, always striving to enhance the quality of practice, recognition and remuneration.

Within her position of executive director she has continued to work towards an increasingly professionalized sector by raising the bar of quality ELCC programs and services for all children, increasing recognition for the professionals working in the system and inspiring government policy that reflects these priorities.



Scan this QR code with your smart phone to visit the Start with Play website.

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## ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

### ALBERTA

Opposition MLA Dr. David Swann announced that the provincial government needs to do more to create affordable child-care options for Alberta families. The Calgary Liberal hosted a town hall meeting to discuss the issue in March, saying that Alberta is spending the least of any province on early education in Canada. According to the province, licensed daycare in Alberta costs on average between \$950 and \$1,200 per month. To qualify for a subsidy, a household income has to be below \$50,000. Swann added that although Alberta might not be ready for Quebec-style subsidized child care - where parents pay \$7 per day but also pay higher provincial taxes - the province should find ways to make the service more affordable.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

Williams Lake city council is advocating a provincial \$10 a day child care program in B.C. Councillor Sue Zacharias said she can see this coming to the forefront of the political scene in the next two to five years if B.C. is going to keep on track with improving its business economy, improving more workers in the work force, and improving the tax generated by people working. "Last week council ratified a poll of its members to approve submission of a resolution to the North Central Local Government Association to advocate for the implementation of a Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning, and a call for action to begin steps towards implementing a \$10/Day Child Care Program for BC.

### MANITOBA

The Manitoba budget tabled in March included \$5.5 million to create more child-care spaces. The budget will also provide funding to child-care centres so they can increase child care employees salaries. Both spending initiatives are part of the NDP government's aim to make Manitoba affordable, create more jobs for young people, and keep more workers in the province. Details about the launch of a new multi-year plan that will build more child-care centres, create new spaces and provide higher wages and additional

training for more child-care professionals is expected shortly.

The provincial government has heard from parents and early childhood educators, as well as school administrators, that creating strong links between child care centres and schools would help make life easier for working families and they are committed to strengthening these connections.

### NEW BRUNSWICK

New Brunswick's Liberal leader Brian Gallant wants the provincial government to release inspection reports for daycare, saying that the public should know if inspections are being done and if any problems are being corrected. Marie-Claude Blais, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, said inspection reports can't be released because they contain personal information. The minister said parents can ask daycare operators for their inspection reports now and new regulations that have been introduced will produce inspection reports without personal information, which daycare operators will be required to post. The department says it's expected the new regulations will be proclaimed during the spring session of the legislature.

### NEWFOUNDLAND

The leader of the NDP, Lorraine Michael, says if the province is serious about wanting to encourage population growth, it should be looking at affordable, accessible child care. Michael believes one of the biggest barriers for young people considering starting a family is the availability of child care and even when spaces are open, the cost is prohibitive for many families. This March, the provincial government announced just over \$121,000 under a new child care capacity initiative. The money will be used to help with the potential development of new regulated child care centres. The number of regulated spaces has increased and for the first time, the increase in non-profit spaces is greater than commercial spaces.

### NUNAVUT

Nunavut Arctic College is breathing new life into its early childhood education programming. More than 70 students from around Nunavut are now registered for credit courses and the college plans to launch a two-year diploma program by next September, using federal funding. Currently,

child care workers in Nunavut are only required to have first aid, as well as CPR, where available. Nunavut inherited its Child Care Act from the Northwest Territories. The NWT has since updated its regulations, but Nunavut has not. The course includes a new module on Inuit child rearing and is taught in Inuktitut. This module is based on the expansive research that points to the importance for children to learn from within their culture and their language.

### ONTARIO

In February in Toronto, a four-month-old baby died in an unlicensed apartment daycare, the fourth child to die in an unregulated facility in the city in seven months. New child care legislation to tighten controls has been introduced in Ontario by Minister of Education Liz Sandals, but that's not going to do anything for the crisis of access or affordability. Some child care operators are concerned that proposed changes to provincial legislation governing how many toddlers can be in a group could create unsafe environments. Changing the ratio of early childhood educators to children could also lower the quality of care.

### QUEBEC

In the recent Quebec budget the Parti Québécois government introduced two weeks before calling the election, the party proposed to increase the rate from \$7 a day, to \$8 in September, and then finally to \$9 in 2015, anticipating \$120 million in additional revenues for the government. About 55 per cent of the 1,400 Quebecers who responded to Radio-Canada's CROP poll said they were in favour of such an increase. Thirty-eight per cent said they were opposed.

### SASKATCHEWAN

The province is now spending \$52.7 million to create 500 new licensed daycare spaces in Saskatchewan, a \$2.2 million increase over last year. The province said some of the licensed spaces will be located in schools. Finding daycare in Saskatchewan can often be very competitive and costly for parents. Saskatchewan's population went up by more than 20,000 people last year and the province has one of the youngest demographics in Canada, with many new and expecting parents.



## CALENDAR

## APRIL

25-27

**Berkeley, California**

Fourth International Conference on Families with Parental Mental Health Challenges: *Addressing the Needs of the Whole Families*. Visit [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/MentalHealth2014/default.asp](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/MentalHealth2014/default.asp).

## MAY

2-3

**Kentville, NS**

5<sup>th</sup> Kingstec Spring Conference: *Nurturing Environments* hosted by the NSCC Early Childhood Development Support Centre. Register at: <http://www.ecdsc.nsc.ca>

6-9

**San Juan, Puerto Rico**

*World Forum on Early Care and Education*

Annual World Forum from the World Forum Foundation. Learn about the lives of children, families, and early childhood providers from all ethnic, cultural, political, and religious backgrounds. [www.worldforumfoundation.org](http://www.worldforumfoundation.org)

29-31

**Winnipeg, MB**

MCCA's 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Early Learning and Child Care Conference *Wisdom Begins with Wonder*. Keynote speakers include Craig Kielburger, Toni & Robin Christie, and Jeff Johnson. Information: [www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org)

## JUNE

6-7

**Dartmouth, NS**

Nova Scotia Child Care Association Early Learning and Care Conference & Trade Show

*Inspired Educators: Inspiring Classrooms* is presented by NSCCA, CCEGENS and CPRPS. Register at <http://nschildcareassociation.org>

## OCTOBER

22-24

**Vancouver, BC**

*The 4th Health and Wellbeing in Children, Youth, and Adults with Developmental Disabilities* Conference This conference will provide educational and informative updates on psychiatric, behavioural and complex health components specific to individuals with DD, and showcase best practices in the field. Information: [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/HealthandWellbeing2014](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/HealthandWellbeing2014)

## NOVEMBER

13-15

**Winnipeg MB**

*Childcare2020*

Come back to Winnipeg for Canada's Fourth National Child Care Policy Conference organized by: the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. Register now to secure your spot at: [childcare2020.ca](http://childcare2020.ca). You can book accommodation at the same time at an excellent discounted conference rate.

## RESEARCH UPDATES

**Childmind the gap: Reforming childcare to support mothers into work**

Author(s): Spencer Thompson, Dalia Ben-Galim

Published date: 21 Feb 2014

Download full publication at <http://www.ippr.org>

This report from Britain's Institute for Public Policy Research explores the factors behind maternal employment in the UK, and especially the pivotal role of affordable, accessible childcare in supporting mothers who want to work, or to work more, to do so. The report notes that "Increasing maternal employment rates also provides benefits to the public purse." Just 5 per cent more women in the British work force, it estimates, would generate the equivalent of nearly \$1.4 billion in tax revenue alone.

**No child left behind: Subsidized child care and children's long-run outcomes**

Author: Havnes, Tarjei & Mogstad, Magne

Publication Date: 1 May 2011

Source: *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* Vol. 3 No. 2 (May 2011)

[http://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Havnes\\_Mogstad\\_2011.pdf](http://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Havnes_Mogstad_2011.pdf)

An article from the American Economic Journal uses difference-in-differences estimates to show that "subsidized child care had strong positive effects on children's educational attainment and labour market participation, and also reduced welfare dependency."

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