



October 30, 2013

Dear Child Care Colleague,

Last week, I was shopping for my wife's birthday gift. Every year, I try to choose something for Sharon that she will truly value.

But this year, her birthday happened to land at a particularly busy time for both of us. She decided she'd prefer to postpone her birthday until we can both celebrate properly. Because she'd rather have the time together than a gift. And she's really on to something, because researchers have found that shared experiences make us happier than material possessions.

This got me thinking about Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. Every day that you work, you give young children and families a precious gift that keeps on giving—the gift of your time, the gift of attention and the gift of high quality learning interactions with a caring adult.

We know a great deal about young children's brain development. For example, we know that a young child's brain is forming 700 new neural connections per second. We know that a three-year-old's brain has *double* the number of connections of our own adult brain and that a young child's brain has *10 times* the number of connections of the *entire internet!*

The interesting thing about these synaptic connections is that they don't fire on their own. Quality interactions are best for young minds. *Attunement*—that magical moment when you lock eyes on a child as theirs lock onto yours. I recognize that you, as ECEs and child care workers, are in a unique position to provide this specialized support right when children need it the most.

Unlike interchangeable gifts, this unique present you're giving young children is quite literally woven into the fabric of their neural pathways. By setting children on the right path of life, giving them healthier and happier futures, you provide them with a gift that they'll never be able to return to you, except in smiles, hugs and lifelong memories.

On this day, I thank each of you for giving children the pure gift of early learning, education and care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Grieve".

Jim Grieve
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years Division