



**Spring/Summer
2019**

**AECEO Public Policy
Responses**

**Provincial Board
Slate**

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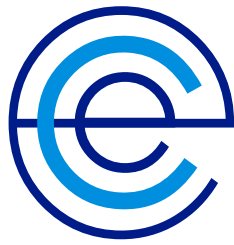
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The eceLINK is a quarterly publication of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO). Since 1992, the publication has been distributed across Ontario to all our members and affiliate organizations. The eceLINK has a circulation of approximately 3000, reaching Early Childhood Educators working in different early learning and child care settings. They include students, frontline practitioners, administrators & supervisors, trainers and policy makers.

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**Appointed by the Board of Directors on an interim basis to fill vacancy*

AECEO Welcomes Erin Filby, Community Organizing and Communications Coordinator

The Board of Directors is very pleased to introduce Erin Filby as the AECEO's Community Organizing and Communications Coordinator.

Erin has a Diploma with Honours in Early Childhood Education from George Brown College and studied English Literature at London Metropolitan University. She has worked most recently as Pimaatiswin Assistant and Coordinator at the Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto and brings a strong background in community organizing as a member of the executive committee of Project Organize and through previous work with AECEO delivering our Building Skills for Change in Early Years and Child Care workshops to groups of diverse Early Childhood Educators.



Erin's background in event planning and advocacy includes medium to large scale event planning for issues-based community events, including the Sisters In Spirit Vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and Indigenous Full Moon and Solstice Celebration events for 200+ people. She has also organized smaller scale protest actions around international LGBTQ human rights.

Erin is excited by the idea of helping ECEs find their voices and their power and is inspired by the ECE profession that is full of extraordinary, knowledgeable, motivated professionals, ready to better the world one child at a time. She believes it is unjust that so many ECEs cannot afford to work in the profession that they studied and are passionate about and is committed to working for change.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Issue: Fall 2019

Submission deadline: June 1, 2019

**Please email manuscript submission to
info@aeceo.ca**

Author Guidelines

Subject parameters: Early Childhood Policy, Early Childhood Practice, Early Childhood Pedagogy, Social Justice in ECE, Professionalism, Disability and Inclusion in ECE, Environmentalism in ECE, Collaborative Practices, Diversity in ECE, Action Research in ECE, Early Childhood Classroom Issues at the Program Level, Pedagogical documentation, Engaging How does Learning Happen?

Form and Style

Style should be consistent with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition). The journal uses Canadian spelling; please consult the Oxford Canadian Dictionary. The editors welcome manuscripts between 5000-8000 words.

Please email info@aeceo.ca for the full submission guidelines.

Please note that you can submit manuscripts following the subject parameters at any time to be considered for the peer review process, please send manuscripts in Microsoft Word format to info@aeceo.ca. You can also submit general content articles (non peer reviewed) at anytime to be considered for publication in the eceLink magazine, please send general content to info@aeceo.ca.



SAVE THE DATE

AECEO Annual Meeting 2019

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario will hold its Annual Meeting of Members on June 18th, 2019. The online AGM provides an opportunity to engage with Provincial Board and candidates and to be involved in the governance of the Association.

Tuesday, June 18 @ 6:30 p.m.

Where: **Online via Zoom meetings**

Further details will be distributed prior to the AGM.

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SCHOOL SPECIALTY **Outside Back Cover**

The AECEO would like to acknowledge & thank the following contributors:

Cherry Chan

Elaine B. Frankel

Alana Powell

Kathryn Underwood

ABOVE PHOTO

AECEO Board member (and former Coordinator) Lyndsay Macdonald and long-time member Daphne (Dee) Stapleton meet up at the International Women's Day march in Toronto.

ECELINK DESIGN & LAYOUT
kim nelson design

RENEWAL TIME?



DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

As a member of the AECEO you are part of a community that takes the ECE profession to the next level. Being a member is the best way to stay involved and connect with others who share your passion.

Renewing your membership helps to ensure that we are able to continue to promote the profession, keep you informed, support your professional growth and advocate on your behalf.

Simply put, belonging to your professional association makes good professional sense.

Keep Informed, Stay Connected!

As the professional association for ECEs in Ontario, the AECEO provides members with vital, up-to-date information about early learning and care.

Keep informed and stay connected by notifying us of changes to your contact information, particularly your email address. Please contact membership@aeceo.ca to confirm or update your current contact information.

WE OFFER SEVERAL WAYS FOR YOU TO STAY INFORMED:



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Are you on Facebook? We are! Find us at www.facebook.com/aeceo and click "like" to join our online community. We will post upcoming event info, news and announcements on this page.

Executive Coordinator's Update

Rachel Lafferty

The AECEO has had a busy winter. In February we submitted our **Pre-Budget Submission** with recommendations that the Ontario government commit to continuing the \$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant while developing, implementing, and funding a Professional Wage Scale with a \$25/hour starting wage for all RECEs in Ontario. To read the full submission, see page 16.

Our **Professional Pay and Decent Work Campaign** is continuing to mobilize ECEs across the province. Our five Decent Work Communities of Practice are advocating in their local areas. Their most recent activities included obtaining hard copy and online signatures for the **Wage Enhancement Grant petition** (in coordination with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care), which was presented sixteen times in the Provincial Legislature with over 14,000 signatures. In collaboration with the OCBCC, we also hosted online MPP meeting and email/letter writing training webinars, kept teams up-to-date with government announcements in the ECE sector, and planned actions for the **2019 Ontario Budget on April 11th**, including a Budget Watch.

As a result of our advocacy, we were very pleased that the **\$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant will continue** to supplement 39,000 RECEs across the province for another year. However, we are cognizant that this is a temporary measure that does not solve the persisting issue of low wages across the sector. We are continuing our efforts towards establishing a Professional Wage Scale that starts at \$25/hour, in keeping with other professions with similar credential and skill requirements.

We also participated in the Ontario government's **Education Consultations regarding the FDK two educator model and class sizes**. The AECEO is pleased that the government has confirmed there will be no class size changes in FDK at this time, although our concerns remain regarding the future of the FDK program beyond the 2019-2020 school year, class sizes in grades 4 and up, before-and-after school programs, and other changes to the education system announced in the government's Education that Works for You plan: www.ontario.ca/page/education-works. To read the AECEO's full consultation submission, see page 9.

In response to feedback regarding our **Provincial FDK Summit**, the Summit will be moved to the fall. This event will bring together RECEs, OCTs, staff, administrators, and stakeholders from across the province to share information, network, and innovate. We will post updates on our website and social media regarding this exciting event - so be sure to stay tuned!

We are deeply concerned by the child care regulation changes contained in the government's omnibus bill, **Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competiveness Act, 2019**, and submitted our response to the Standing Committee on General Government on March 18th. Thank you to our President, Brooke Richardson, who attended the hearings and presented our response to the Committee. To read the full submission, see page 13.

Over the winter we bid a fond farewell to Sonia Tavares, our Community Organizing and Communications Coordinator. Sonia has moved on to work for the Region of Peel as an Advisor for Early Learning and Child Care Services. We, and our Decent Work CoPs, miss her positive spirit and fantastic community organizing skills - and wish her all the best in her new position.

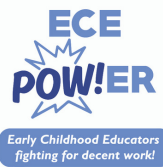
Save the date! We will be in **Sudbury on May 3 & 4** and in **London on June 1 & 2** facilitating **Building Skills for Change in Early Years and Child Care workshops** in partnership with the **Institute for Change Leaders** in cooperation with Olivia Chow. Registration information is on our website - don't miss it!

We are stronger together - don't forget to pledge your support for Professional Pay and Decent Work by signing our online Pledge and asking your employer to sign our Decent Work Charter: www.aeceo.ca/ontario_early_childhood_sector_decent_work_charter. **Remember to renew your AECEO membership, and stay connected with us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.**

In solidarity,
Rachel Lafferty, RECE, OCT, BSc, BEd, MEd



Decent Work Campaign FAQs



The AECEO's Decent Work campaign addresses the low wages and challenging working conditions of RECEs and early years staff wherever they work. We encourage RECEs and early years staff to celebrate and showcase their socially important, valuable work with children and families. We are calling on the government to make funding and policy decisions that provide RECEs and early years staff professional pay and decent work.

We are stronger together - your voice matters!

Where do I belong in the AECEO's Decent Work campaign?

We recognize the complexity of conditions that RECEs and early years staff face in licensed child care, licensed home child care, EarlyON programs, Full Day Kindergarten and other early years programs. You bring a unique and diverse perspective on the challenges, and solutions, that exist in specific workplaces. Your individual experiences are important to the Professional Pay and Decent Work campaign.

How does this contribute to my well-being?

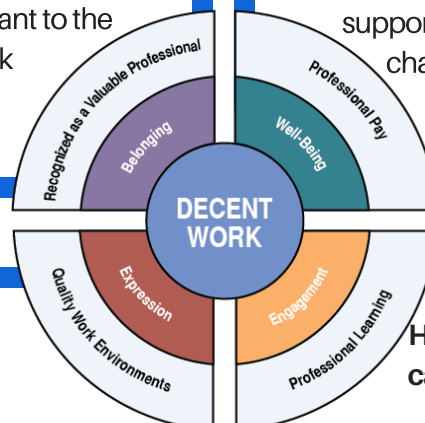
Becoming active through working with other RECEs and early years staff in your community to achieve positive change provides a sense of empowerment. Connect with others through a Decent Work Community of Practice or your own network to build your collective voice. This creates a supportive and safe space to discuss the challenges you face.

How can I express myself in your campaign?

You can build your leadership and advocacy capacity by working toward change at the local level and across the province. We want you to share your story with the community. The AECEO can help to support you in highlighting your issues while you work with your community to bring light to the unique conditions you face.

How can I engage in the campaign?

Share your story with us - you are the expert on your work and we want to hear from you. Bring information about our campaign back to your community, including parents and the public. We will provide you with tools for your action plan. Become a member of the AECEO! We want to continue to build relationships and partnerships with RECEs and early years staff across the province.



AECEO Response to Ministry of Education Consultations: Kindergarten Classroom

The AECEO appreciates the need for on-going stakeholder collaboration and the opportunity to be included in the Education Consultations regarding Full Day Kindergarten and class sizes.

Question 1: What are the implications of the present ‘two educator’ model for student outcomes, educator workload and working conditions, and value for money?

Student Outcomes & the Two Educator Team

The AECEO fully supports the two educator model in Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). The partnership between a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) and an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) in FDK commenced in 2010 with full implementation across the province in 2014 through Bill 242, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act of 2010 which included ECEs in Ontario’s Education Act⁵. The program was implemented to provide high quality, universally accessible Junior and Senior two year FDK to all children in Ontario⁷.

An extensive body of empirical evidence documents the learning benefits of the two-educator (OCT and RECE), play-based FDK curriculum model for children’s learning. Ontario has been, and continues to be, a leader in early learning since it acted on the innovative recommendations of the commissioned report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, completed in 2009^{5,6}. Research findings confirm that children in Kindergarten require familiar, consistent, supportive, and qualified educators to thrive. The most effective Kindergarten environments for better child outcomes are those which involve an RECE and OCT who professionally collaborate in their development of play-based

pedagogy^{3,4,5}. The unique and complimentary training of RECEs and OCTs working in partnership lends itself to rich educational and developmental learning opportunities for children at a critical point in their young lives.

Ontario’s FDK program has been shown to produce powerful benefits to children in both the short and the long term. Children in FDK outperform children in half day kindergarten (HDK) in literacy and mathematics by the end of Kindergarten. The most recent set of studies on Ontario’s FDK program have documented that the academic gains children achieved in FDK are still observable by the end of Grade 2^{4,6}. Vocabulary scores of children in FDK ‘remain consistently higher,’⁶ which has been attributed to the additional time for learning that FDK provides. When comparing Junior Kindergarten groups (one in HDK and one in FDK) at the half year point, children in FDK had already surpassed the HDK cohort in ‘reading, number knowledge, drawing complexity, and self-regulation’⁶.

In a study published in January of 2019, researchers suggest their findings provide “evidence of long-term self-regulatory and academic gains of FDK. It adds to the program and policy literature in early learning about the kind of FDK program that leads to long-term benefits, in this case a two-year full-day play-based kindergarten program co-taught by a professional team of an Early Childhood Educator and a Kindergarten Teacher. Benefits for FDK were shown in all academic areas at the end of kindergarten and most remained significantly greater to the end of the primary division”⁶.

In addition to the documented academic benefits of FDK, the current model also supports children’s social development by promoting self-regulation, engagement, working memory, autonomy, social skills, self-confidence,

self-concept, positive behaviours, and overall well-being^{6,7}. Healthy social development is also associated with academic achievement well into the primary grades^{4,6}.

Studies confirm that the two educator model provides children with consistency, well-being, and the emotional safety and security that is critical to academic learning and social development^{2,4}. In fact, classrooms that are denied the academic and social-emotional benefit of the two educator model can have negative effects on some children's behaviour and learning outcomes^{2,4}.

The FDK educator team is shown to be particularly essential to children's outcomes due to the uniquely qualified perspectives of each educator². A classroom with an RECE and OCT team has been described as, "by far the best-staffed room (with its) seamless care approach, (it is) relaxed, comfortable, calm, and without incident"². The secure relationships established by the two educator model work in tandem with the play based curriculum of the FDK program to support positive learning experiences for children to reach their full potential⁴.

Test scores in Grade 3 support (these) research findings, with scores that achieved or exceeded provincial literacy and mathematics expectations, with the potential to increase among children who attended FDK⁶. This is a significant long term benefit to the academic achievement of the children of Ontario due to the FDK program.

Children enrolled in FDK programs have themselves noted the importance of play-based curriculum in their learning⁶. It is the right of every child in Ontario to benefit from the FDK program.

Educator Workload & Working Condition: Connection to the Benefits of FDK

The AECEO firmly believes that RECEs benefit when they are well supported and compensated as the professionals that they are. Currently, paid hours of work among RECEs in FDK vary across the province (i.e. six or seven hours paid per day) which impacts professionals who are paid for fewer hours – and is inconsistent with the Ontario-wide expenditures within the education system. The AECEO's policy recommendation is to change the positions of the ten thousand RECEs working in publicly-funded school systems to year-round, salaried status with compensation commensurate with other full-time educators. This would increase and equalize the quality of education the children

receive across the province, enhance the collaborative nature of the partnership that RECEs have with OCTs, and, by systematizing the remuneration process for RECEs in FDK, increase value for taxpayer money^{1,5}.

RECEs are not provided with the same vital professional resources as other educators in the publicly funded school system, including paid planning time and opportunities for professional development⁴. These are critical for educator collaboration, solidarity, reciprocity, and team partnership effectiveness^{2,4,5,7}. The AECEO's policy recommendation is to develop an Early Childhood Workforce Learning Framework which would enable quality related staff supports such as paid time for professional learning and expanded opportunities for enhancing the foundation obtained through their pre-service Early Childhood Education qualifications³.

Workplace conditions that support the two educator model include the need for recognition and clarification of the important role and responsibilities of the RECE as a professional in the FDK program^{4,5}. The resolution of union identified issues and collective agreements that reflect decent work principles as a right of all RECEs will do much to resolve these inequalities in the workplace⁵. The two educator model is worthy of being fully supported: it was intended to be a cost-effective, system enhancing, high quality educational team in Pascal's vision of FDK for Ontario. It is consistent with best practice policies in the publicly funded school system and is anchored in Ontario's Education Act^{2,4,5,7}. It has yet to reach its full potential.

RECEs in FDK Enhance Public Value for Money

RECEs have, through their work in the publicly funded school system, achieved some pay equity in their fight for professional pay for decent work. However, as outlined previously, the value that the RECE brings to the educator team in FDK cannot be overstated. The benefits of investing in quality programming for young children clearly outweigh the costs⁶. As noted, research overwhelmingly confirms that the two educator model benefits children, families, and educators; it is imperative that it continue⁶.

The investment in FDK has already been made; reversing this investment in early childhood education would be wasteful (not to mention costly³) and, most essentially, not in the best interests of children and families. The AECEO believes that the provincial government's refusal

to commit to FDK beyond the 2019-2020 school year will jeopardize the academic and developmental outcomes of the children of Ontario as well as reduce access to universal, high quality programming that Ontario families have come to expect and rely on. The establishment of FDK supports working parents, reduces or eliminates child care costs, and therefore has a positive impact on Ontario's economy⁶. The AECEO's vision is for all of Ontario's children and families to have access to high quality, affordable programs where RECEs are well supported with professional pay and decent work. This vision is founded on the assumption that early childhood education and care is a public good and a human right, not a commodity. In turn, we believe that RECEs are uniquely prepared to plan and implement high quality, meaningful programs for young children, including in Full Day Kindergarten.

Question 2: What are the implications of changes to Kindergarten class size for student outcomes, educator workload and working conditions?

The AECEO's position is that there should be no more than thirteen children to one educator (1:13) in a high-quality early childhood education environment. Therefore, in the FDK classroom with two educators there should be a maximum of twenty-six children (2:26). This is in keeping with the Child Care & Early Years Act that requires one educator per thirteen children (1:13). The maximum board-wide average is twenty-six children per Kindergarten classroom, although some classes have as many as thirty-two children. Any more than twenty-six children per classroom is too large for achieving optimal student outcomes - and calls into serious question safety and space standards².

Currently, the two educator model is implemented if there are sixteen or more children in an FDK classroom. Ontario Reg 224/10 under the Education Act contains an exception that allows for classrooms with less than sixteen children to staff only one OCT educator (rather than the two educator model of RECE and OCT). After observing several FDK classrooms, one researcher commented that "the importance of the ECE was, perhaps, never more evident than in the one classroom in the study with no ECE...in a class with only 14 students. This was

the smallest classroom and it was by far the most chaotic classroom in the study"². We recommend that the two educator model be employed in all FDK classrooms in Ontario, including those with sixteen children or fewer.

As noted above, the research literature clearly documents the importance of secure relationships with educators for social development and optimal learning outcomes. Increasing class sizes in FDK will overwhelm both children and educators and will most definitely jeopardize safety, responsive relationships, and therefore the quality of the education children receive^{2,4}. Increasing class sizes beyond twenty-six children is therefore not better value for government investment.

The AECEO acknowledges that improvements are always possible in the early childhood education system - and we emphasize that government change to policy and process should be based on the highest quality research evidence, careful analyses of empirical data, and through comprehensive consultation. We appreciate the need for on-going stakeholder collaboration and are delighted to have the opportunity to be included in the Education Consultations regarding FDK and class sizes. We are conscious of the fact that the full roll out of the Ontario FDK program - one of the most innovative and economically important social and educational programs in Canada to date - occurred only 5 years ago. We are only now beginning to realize the empirical benefits of Ontario's existing FDK program for children and families. While we recognize the roll-out of a program of this size and nature would have challenges, all current evidence suggests Ontario's unique, two educator model, play-based FDK program is significantly benefiting Ontario's children and families. Undoing this progress through dismantling the existing two-educator model would be devastating to all stakeholders.

We urgently call on the government to reconsider any changes it may propose to the FDK program in Ontario without reviewing the research evidence and engaging in a formal, transparent and systematized consultation with stakeholders including parents and educators. It is imperative that Full Day Kindergarten, with the RECE-OCT educator team and a class size hard cap of twenty-six, remain universally accessible to all of Ontario's children.

¹Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (2017). Transforming work in Ontario's early years and child care sector: workforce strategy recommendations prepared by the decent work task force. Retrieved from: http://www.aceeo.ca/transforming_work_in_ontario_s_early_years_and_child_care_sector

²Bas, J. A. (2017). Well-being in the kindergarten eating environment and the role of early childhood educators. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, 42(4), 37-52.

³Canadian Economist, Pierre Fortin, has several academic publications regarding the lasting social and economic cost of eliminating the Quebec model of early education and care. For a recent document, see: https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Policy%20Commentaries/PFortin_Twelve_Flawed_Statements_of_the_Fraser_Institute.pdf

⁴Ganathan, R. (2011). Implications of full day kindergarten program policy on early childhood pedagogy and practice. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 5(2), 33-45.

⁵Langford, R., Di Santo, A., Valeo, A., Underwood, K., & Lenis, A. (2016). The innovation of Ontario full-day kindergarten educator teams: Have they reproduced the split systems of care and education? *Gender and Education*, 30(5), 569-586. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1258456>

⁶Pelletier, J. P. & Corter, J. E. (2019). A longitudinal comparison of learning outcomes in full-day and half-day kindergarten. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 112, 1-19.

⁷Timmons, K. (2018). Educator expectations in full-day kindergarten: Comparing the factors that contribute to the formation of early childhood educator and teacher expectations. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46, 613-628. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-018-0891-0>

⁸Pascal, C.E. (2009). *With Our Best Future in Mind*. Toronto: Province of Ontario.

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AECEO Submission in Response to Bill 66: Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act

The AECEO is deeply concerned by the regulation changes to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, the *Education Act*, and the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, proposed in Bill 66. These changes will lead Ontario in the wrong direction, one that compromises the quality of care and education for young children and does not contribute to purposeful system building.

The Ontario Government describes their priorities as:

1. Reducing red tape and administrative burden
2. Making child care more affordable
3. Increasing choice and availability for families
4. Improving quality and delivering high standards of care (Ontario Ministry of Education Memorandum, December 6th, 2018).

The AECEO believes that the regulation changes proposed in Bill 66 will jeopardize quality and high standards and does not improve the availability or affordability of early childhood education and care for families.

Before and after school programs

The repeal of Paragraph 2 of subsection 259 (2) of the *Education Act* will have a negative impact on both quality and high standards of care as it would remove the requirement for 3rd party operators providing before and after school care for School Boards to have early childhood educators (ECEs) lead their programs. Ontario ECEs have specialized knowledge of child development and pedagogy in the early years. They create rich, inclusive, learning and care environments that are inquiry based. We know from research and experience that high-quality early childhood education and care is directly linked to well-educated and qualified ECEs.

Removing the requirement of ECE led 3rd party before and after care programs directly jeopardizes the quality of

Our vision is for all of Ontario's children and families to have access to high quality, affordable, ECEC programs where RECEs and program staff are well supported with professional pay and decent work.

experiences for young children. Before and after care for 4 and 5-year-olds should be provided by well-educated and well-compensated ECEs.

Our vision is for all of Ontario's children and families to have access to high quality, affordable, ECEC programs where RECEs and program staff are well supported with professional pay and decent work. This vision is founded on the assumption that ECEC is a public good and a human right, not a commodity. In turn, we believe that ECEs are uniquely prepared to plan and implement high quality, meaningful early learning and care programs for young children. Leaving the care and education of kindergarten-aged children up to market competition in this way – by promoting cost cutting for school age program operators through loosening qualification standards - and permitting the hiring of individuals without early childhood education (or other child related

preservice training) credentials for their school-age programs does not align with what the AECEO believes is in the best interest of Ontario's children and families.

While the government suggests that reducing staffing eligibility in this repeal will support the creation of board-run before and after programs, the AECEO believes that this move is premature in the current Ontario early childhood education and care system. Long-term studies examining the relationship between staffing qualifications and ECEC delivery systems show that lower staffing eligibility requirements while other components of the ECEC system are also fledgling, powerfully diminishes quality. Especially now, this method of removing barriers for creating before and after care for young children is not an appropriate approach for Ontario. The AECEO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider methods that lead to the creation of children's programs that provide well-compensated positions with decent working conditions for ECEs, who are best positioned to provide quality care and education for our youngest members of society.

Home child care

The repeal of subparagraph 2 iii of subsection 6 (3) of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* would allow home child care providers to care for three children under two years of age, as well as the additional allowable children over the age of two. Simultaneously, the repeal of Paragraph 2 of subsection 6 (5) of the Act allows for home child care operators to care for any number of their own children over 4 at the same time. It threatens the safety of the care environment that home child care operators will no longer be required to count their own children aged 4 and over in their ratios as this ultimately could lead to well over the legislated 5 or 6 children being cared for in the home. Increasing the number of allowable children under two years of age is concerning not only in terms of the jeopardized safety of the children in care, but also in the compromised time for and quality of engagements and interactions between caregiver and each child, which we recognize as crucial to young children's well being.

While licensed home child care operators are accountable to Ministry licensing standards, we are also troubled by the presumption that in order to address significant problems of affordability and access to child care, Ontario's response is to increase the burden of responsibility on an

already devalued and gendered workforce. ECEs deserve the opportunity to make a professional wage and have decent working conditions while operating home-based care. The AECEO stands by our commitment that it is in the best interest of ECEs, children, and families that Ontario addresses problems in affordability and accessibility by building additional capacity through system-planning and government funding, rather than expecting already over-worked and over-burdened ECEs to take on additional responsibilities.

The repeal of Paragraph 2 of section 7 of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* also presents a concern for the AECEO. In the current ECEC system, removing the requirement that you must be a licensed home child care agency to organize, monitor, or provide administration to home child care services opens the door to problematic possibilities for how these services are organized, skipping over careful, systematic, examinations of alternative models of home child care administration.

These regulatory changes will reduce quality

In our current context, where child care is delivered through a market model, we continue to see a priority on profit and cost savings as opposed to quality. The message that "Ontario is open for business" can include a strong story of how a well-operated, publicly funded, high standards meeting early childhood education and care system *supports* economic development in this province. The potential implications of focusing on

In our current context, where child care is delivered through a market model, we continue to see a priority on profit and cost savings as opposed to quality.

profit and cost-saving *within* the business of delivering child care is more problematic. The AECEO is worried about operators who continue to, or begin to, organize child care services under this new priority of “open for business.” We believe that the care and education of young children is best provided through a planned system that is publicly funded and disagree with regulatory changes that encourages the expansion of commercial enterprises into the ECEC sector.

In revisiting the priorities as described by The Ontario Government, we believe these regulatory changes do not meet the desired goals:

1. “Reducing red tape and administrative burden”

Reducing staffing qualification requirements under the Education Act will not reduce red tape or administrative burden. It will, however, encourage and allow for the expansion of before and after care programs that are not led by ECEs and are not aligned with best practice and research on the care and education of kindergarten aged children.

2. “Making child care more affordable”

Increasing the number of allowable children in licensed and unlicensed home child care will have no direct impact on affordability for families. Many ECEs who operate home child care struggle to make ends meet in the current system – and fees remain high for families. We recommend that to appropriately address affordability, the government must consider base funding which supports both lowering the cost of services while ensuring appropriate compensation for ECEs.

3. “Increasing choice and availability for families”

Decreasing regulations and increasing the number of younger children in home-based care does not ensure that choice and availability for families will increase. In fact, these regulatory changes continue to ensure that services will be left up to the market, which has failed to meet families’ needs. We urge the government to reconsider their approach and take responsibility to ensure that child care services are funded, planned, and meet the needs of families, equitably, across the province. A publicly-funded system will ensure that families have choices in how their children receive care and that spaces are available to them no matter where they live in Ontario.

4. “Improving quality and delivering high standards of care”

There is no indication that the proposed regulatory changes will improve the quality of care in Ontario. In fact, research evidence suggests that many of the changes will result in the opposite: quality will decline. By increasing the number of young children in care and allowing additional children to be cared for in the home, we are increasing the burden and workload on our valuable ECEs. Decades of research consistently associates higher quality child care with *lower* adult:child ratios.

Additionally, repealing sections of the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, would

- eliminate the requirement for an employer to apply to the Director for approval allowing some or all of its employees to work more than 48 hours per week
- eliminate the requirement for an employer to apply to the Director for approval to permit an employer to average an employee’s hours of work in determining entitlement to overtime pay.

The AECEO believes that these changes do not reflect decent work principles and will further stretch RECEs who are already working long hours to maintain legislated staff to child ratios. These changes will add to the pervasive inequalities in the workplace that RECEs are already experiencing and will most certainly jeopardize the quality of care Ontario’s children receive.

The AECEO confidently states that ECEs benefit when they are well supported and can attend to and engage with the children in their care purposefully and meaningfully. In turn, children and families benefit from higher quality programs when ECEs are well supported and well compensated. From this perspective, we believe the government must reconsider their approach and take on their responsibility of funding and supporting early years services and ECEs.

We urge the government to withdraw Bill 66 and to engage in a full public consultation process on all of its provisions with respect to the Early Childhood Education and Care system in Ontario.

AECEO Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs 2019 Budget Consultations

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) is the professional association for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in Ontario.

We support RECEs in their professional practice and advocate for the recognition and appropriate compensation of the profession. RECEs are fundamental to high quality early learning and child care (ECEC) in Ontario. Our members work throughout the province in programs for young children and their families, including regulated centre based and home based child care, full-day kindergarten, EarlyON programs, and support services for children with disabilities.

Our vision is for all of Ontario's children and families to have access to quality affordable ECEC programs where RECEs and program staff are well supported with professional pay and decent work. This vision is founded on the assumption that ECEC is a public good and human right, not a commodity.

Executive Summary of Budget Action Recommendations

- 1) Commit to continuing the \$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant and immediately extending it to include RECEs in other sectors including EarlyON staff
- 2) Develop and implement a publicly funded province wide wage scale with a \$25/hour minimum wage for RECEs and commensurate compensation for early years staff, a benefits package, including paid sick and personal leave days; we advise the Government to commit at least \$375 million as a first step to establishing the wage scale

In addition, we support the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) in their call for responsible and stable investments to the child care system. We recommend the Ontario government:

- Maintain stable funding levels to licensed child care to ensure consistent service for over 400,000 Ontario children and their families who use child care every day. This should include maintaining general allocations to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers/District Social Services Administration Boards ("system managers", CMSMs and DSSABs), steady progress on Ontario's expansion strategy and fee stabilization support.
- Continue the \$2/hour wage enhancement grant to child care staff while working towards a wage scale. Since 2015 this grant has helped support staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care; and reduced poverty by supporting employment and income security.
- Ensure all funding is indexed to inflation.

In order to make the significant transition to a high-quality child care system, both the AECEO and the OCBCC call on the Ontario government to commit to achieving:

- **Affordable Fees:** Allocate \$635.5 million as a down payment on affordability; begin transition to operational funding in child care centres to support low fees or no fees.
- **Decent Work:** Implement a provincial workforce strategy to ensure all staff have professional pay and decent work, including committing \$375 million as a first step to establishing a province-wide wage scale for Registered Early Childhood Educators and early years staff with entry level pay for RECEs of \$25/hour.
- **Expand public and non-profit spaces:** Allocate a further \$500,000 to strengthen the current Expansion Strategy to grow the non-profit and public child care sectors.
- **Immediately follow through on implementation of *Growing Together, Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy (Growing Together)*.**

Wage Enhancement Grant

1. Commit to continuing the \$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant and immediately extending it to include RECEs in other sectors including EarlyON staff

According to the Ministry of Education's 2018 licensed child care survey we know that:

- 8.6% of Registered Early Childhood Educators working in licensed child care earn \$15/hour or less;
- 45% of RECEs working in licensed child care earn between \$15-\$20/hour;
- 15% of directly approved staff and 42% of other program staff working in licensed child care earn between \$14-\$15/hour;

We also know that 37% of licensed child care centres in Ontario are operating with exemptions to the Ontario Early Years and Child Care Act (2014) requiring a minimum number of RECEs in centres¹.

Every day, Registered Early Childhood Educators make the difficult decision to leave the sector and the work they are qualified to perform (and that preservice ECE training funding helped to prepare them to do). We repeatedly hear from our members that low wages and poor working conditions hinder their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs. Recruiting and retaining well-educated and qualified RECEs while making child care affordable for Ontario families requires the Government of Ontario to interrupt the co-dependent relationship between staff wages and parent fees. This market mechanism is not serving parents or educators well, and, in fact, the high cost of child care and the need for better compensation for RECEs often brings the interests of these two essential groups of people in children's lives in direct conflict with each other.

The median \$17.29/hour wage of RECES across the province² is simply not a professional or adequate wage reflective for tertiary-level educated RECEs. Sadly, though not surprisingly, of 200 third-year students enrolled in early childhood education studies at Ryerson in 2017, only two students planned to work in the child care sector as RECES³. At the same time, RECEs that remain in the sector are being

stretched to the brink. Increasing professional expectations and development are virtually impossible to achieve within notoriously poor working conditions (i.e. little or no paid planning time, little or no compensation, and/or time off for PD activity). Furthermore, 1 in 4 RECEs in Ontario work an 8-hour day/40-hour work week in addition to a part-time job to make ends meet⁴.

Wage Scale: Professional Pay & Decent Work

- 2. Develop and implement a publicly funded province wide annually indexed wage scale with a \$25/hour minimum wage for RECEs and commensurate compensation for early years staff, a benefits package, including paid sick and personal leave days; we advise the Government to commit at least \$375 million as a first step to establishing the wage scale**

The wage scale must inform operational funding to early years programs, while recognizing the level of education and years of experience for RECEs and staff in accordance with pay equity principles.

Operational funding for child care and early years programs is necessary to equitably raise the salaries, working conditions and morale of all RECEs and early years staff in addition to strengthening the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. A standardized wage rate in the early years and child care sector (referred to as the ECEC sector for the rest of this document) will ensure staff with equivalent education and work responsibilities are paid a similar rate of pay no matter where they work in the sector in Ontario⁵. These initiatives would therefore provide consistent quality across programs.

RECEs are skilled professionals with a specialization in facilitating young children's development and learning. The impact of their work extends beyond the child to include the child's family and community. The value of this work has been clearly documented in an overwhelming body of evidence highlighting the importance of the systematic provision of healthy child development programs and supports for families with young children. RECEs have continued to advance their profession through increased levels of professional preservice preparation and ongoing in-service professional learning, in addition to mandatory professional registration and regulation through the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE). RECEs are held accountable to the public through the College's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. In addition, RECEs continue to face amplified pressure to implement several key early childhood programs offered by the government under increasingly higher quality standards and frameworks.

Even with the increasing professionalization of RECEs and the mounting evidence pointing to the immense importance of their work, RECEs have seen a very slow and limited increase in professional recognition through improved compensation and benefits. Low RECE salaries, inconsistent working conditions, and precarious work schedules have resulted in poor morale, job dissatisfaction and high staff turnover. As noted previously, large numbers of RECEs are leaving the sector altogether. Child care programs, as well as EarlyON programs (despite their public operational funding), across Ontario are significantly struggling to recruit and retain qualified RECEs in this perpetually under-resourced ECEC

“RECEs are skilled professionals with a specialization in facilitating young children’s development and learning.”

system. This is having a significant impact on staff consistency in children's programs, on quality, and on ECEC sector stability. These problems will continue to plague the system for years to come if not addressed now.

In November of 2017 the AECEO released and presented to the Ministry of Education our workforce strategy recommendations report *Transforming Work in Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Sector*. This report called for the government of Ontario to institute a province-wide wage scale for Registered Early Childhood Educators with a starting hourly salary of \$25/hour⁶. In a recent AECEO survey of 4,000 staff working in Ontario's early childhood education and care sector (66% of whom were Registered Early Childhood Educators), the majority of respondents across the province who stated a preference supported the introduction of a wage scale that takes into consideration level of education, years of experience, job roles and responsibilities as an appropriate mechanism to improve wages amongst workers in child care and early years programs⁷. This report also included the recommendation to change the positions of full-time designated Early Childhood Educators working in publicly-funded school systems to year-round and salaried status with compensation commensurate with other full-time educators in the public education systems⁶.

In 2018, the AECEO was pleased by the release of the *Growing Together* investment in a workforce strategy for RECEs and early years staff that outlined clear goals, targets, and sustained public funding. *Growing Together* demonstrated that the Ontario government was interested in working toward the important objective of investing in people's talents and skills, and prioritizing children and families, while also addressing the gender wage gap in female dominated sectors.

Growing Together outlines key areas in which ECEC workforce issues will be addressed by Government:

1. Establishing Fair Compensation
2. Improving Working Conditions
3. Enhancing Skills and Opportunities
4. Valuing Contributions
5. Increasing Recruitment⁸

We support and encourage the government to commit to funding and implementing the initiatives outlined in *Growing Together*.

Empirical research has consistently established that high quality ECEC is directly linked to well-educated and qualified RECEs. The compensation and support available to educators and staff must recognize the essential role that they play in children's days, months, years, and future outcomes. Fair

“The compensation and support available to educators and staff must recognize the essential role that they play in children's days, months, years, and future outcomes.”

and appropriate wages and working conditions cannot be based solely or primarily on parent fees as the existing market model of child care necessitates. Staffing expenses are typically 80-90% of child care centres' operating budgets. The revenue that sustains child care centres' operating budgets is primarily from parent fees.

Quality, affordability and access are critical and interrelated parts of a thriving early years and child care system. High quality programs support a child's social, emotional and educational development in the present, while building a foundation for lifelong learning. To achieve the intended benefits of early childhood education and care for children and families, programs need to be of the highest quality. A stable, well-remunerated, professional workforce is the most essential element of quality ECEC programs and an overall system.

Importance to Ontarians

Child care affordability for Ontario families is a serious issue. Child care costs go well beyond the available budget of the majority of families in Ontario – even those with incomes at or above the median income for their community struggle to afford child care. The only sustainable solution to improving families' access to, and their ability to afford high quality child care programs, is through significant and stable government funding that is devoted to child care and early years programs. The quality of Ontario's child care and early years system depends upon its ability to recruit and retain qualified RECE professionals.

As studies have shown, investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC), through accessible, quality, and affordable options has significant positive economic implications for individuals and for society⁹. The work performed by RECEs is directly tied to Ontario's objective of *working and spending smarter while making services work better for people* in many notable ways. Here are three that we would like to highlight:

- 1) RECEs care for young children while parents/guardians continue to work or study in order to develop and use their talents and skills to *participate in Ontario's workforce*.** The essential role that RECEs have in strengthening regional and nation-wide economic prosperity by assisting parents who are combining work, studies, and family responsibilities has been well documented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their highly regarded, rigorous reviews of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in member nations (including Canada)¹⁰.

The only sustainable solution to improving families' access to, and their ability to afford high quality child care programs, is through significant and stable government funding that is devoted to child care and early years programs.

- 2) **RECEs work with young children in a range of early years programs that support a crucial phase of development during which children develop the basic cognitive, social and emotional skills used to thrive in learning which, in turn, contributes to Ontario's future economic growth.** A 2013 accord released by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education highlighted that there has been a shift in Canadians' understanding of the importance that early learning experiences have in shaping the quality of children's lives. We are now, more than ever, aware that high quality learning programming is an essential part of all responsible care for children¹¹.
- 3) **RECEs possess unique talents and well-developed skills that are the key to the quality of early childhood education and care programs.** It is widely acknowledged that RECEs and their early learning and care activities, interactions, and knowledge have a major impact on children's well-being and development¹²; it is only *high quality* early childhood education and care delivered by RECEs that truly supports Ontario's objective of building a better future¹³. Ensuring our children and families have access to high quality early years programs is a *smart way to spend* on our social programs that contribute to *developing and supporting a quality workforce*.

Even amongst these pressing challenges, the AECEO remains hopeful for the future of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) workforce. There have been positive developments in the early years and child care sector, such as the 2017 Renewed Policy Framework and the Canada-Ontario Bilateral Agreement that demonstrates that the Ontario government is somewhat acting to address the issues that are having an impact on the sector. The pursuit of initiatives such as the Wage Enhancement Grant and funding for in-service training demonstrate that some efforts are being made to change elements of the ECEC system.

However, this piecemeal approach cannot adequately address the deep, systemic undervaluing of RECEs as professionals. Provincial investments in well-developed, system-focused initiatives, such as a provincial wage scale beginning at \$25/hour for RECEs, will ultimately be more effective and cost-efficient in the long term. Without a comprehensive, coordinated, system-level approach that recognizes the professional status and work of all RECEs, we will continue to see the most qualified and skilled professionals withdraw from the sector. Public investments made in their postsecondary education and professional learning will be for naught. The unique qualifications of RECEs are of great public value and, therefore, deserving of public resources to ensure that this work is compensated appropriately.

The challenge now becomes the optimal utilization of public funds to create sustainable and meaningful change. As a first step, while developing and implementing a wage scale for RECEs, the AECEO calls for the immediate continuance of the \$2/hour Wage Enhancement Grant. Current expenditure on the Wage Enhancement Grant (\$203 million in 2018¹⁴) must be committed for 2019-2020. Early Childhood Educators work in a variety of settings in Ontario, including EarlyON centres and as designated ECEs in Full Day Kindergarten. Their wages and working conditions are included in our calls for improvements to compensation and benefits for all RECEs in Ontario, understanding that the revenue that funds their work is 100% publicly generated¹⁵.

We were pleased with Ontario's past efforts to transform the ECEC sector. We also understand that working toward the goal of transformational change in the provision of a high-quality early years and child care system will be a multi-year process. However, such change cannot and will not be successful without the well-compensated, stable, professional early childhood workforce that Ontario's children and families deserve.

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From the Editor

The article, *Inclusion is an Experience not a Placement* in this eceLINK peer reviewed collection is timely. At the provincial level, recent Conservative government actions have raised many questions about the inclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in school settings. In addition, there are continuing concerns about the exclusion of young children with complex disabilities from early childhood settings. Many early childhood educators who hold inclusion values, struggle to include children with disabilities in the every day life of a program limited by a medical model that regards disability as a pathology. The meaning of inclusion is, therefore, highly contentious at the political, policy and practice levels in Ontario. I know from experience in co-writing a textbook on the inclusion of young children with disabilities that the meaning of inclusion in early childhood education and care frequently shifts in response to historical and social changes in understandings of disability (Paasche, Langford, Nolan & Cipparrone, 2019). This issue's article written by researchers from the School of Early Childhood Studies at Ryerson University offers a current perspective on the meaning of inclusion. As Frankel, Chan and Underwood write it is their hope that thinking about and practicing inclusion as an experience "will add to the public discourse by drawing attention to procedures, power, and practices as early childhood services aim to fully include all young children and families." We invite you to read and find out what it means when inclusion is an experience for children, families and educators.

Rachel Langford PhD

Inclusion is an Experience, Not a Placement

Elaine B. Frankel, Ed.D., Cherry Chan, M.A., Kathryn Underwood, Ph.D.

Abstract

Early education, care, and intervention programs are part of a complex system of services as experienced by children and their families. Based on a study of institutional processes and relationships from the standpoint of families with children who are thought of as disabled in the Inclusive Early Childhood Service System (IECSS) project, this article highlights common components of inclusion as an experience rather than merely a placement in a class. Early childhood educators and childcare programs are encouraged to play a critical role as part of this system providing accessible, equitable and integrated services to children.

Key words

inclusion, early years, childhood disability, early intervention system

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Kathryn Underwood is Associate Professor in the School of Early Childhood Studies. She is the Project Director of the Inclusive Early Childhood Service System (IECSS) project. Her research spans disability studies in education, childhood, and social planning and is informed by a commitment to disability rights and valuing human differences.

Inclusion is an Experience, Not a Placement

Many early childhood educators express concern about how to include and accommodate activities for children with disabilities in high-quality programs for all children. Early intervention programs that assess and provide diagnostically specific services to children are available in some communities, but many early childhood educators are not aware of how early intervention fits with their own practice. For this reason, inclusion as one component of a fully accessible and integrated system of early intervention, childcare, preschool, kindergarten, and family support remains elusive for many young children with disabilities. And many early childhood educators are not aware of where their institution fits in a larger system of services accessed by children with disabilities and their families.

Considering Inclusion

Inclusion has been described as an integral principle of early intervention in early childhood and family support programs for young children in Canada (Underwood & Frankel, 2012). In recognition of the importance of providing inclusive services the government of Ontario's policy set as an objective the promotion of inclusion in early years and childcare settings (OME, 2017).

This article on inclusion is informed in part by findings from the *Inclusive Early Childhood Service System* (IECSS) project, which seeks to explore institutional processes from the standpoint of parents seeking access to early childhood and disability services. The IECSS project is a longitudinal study that began in 2014. The project is a broad partnership among community, university, and government organisations. To date the project has interviewed parents from nine communities across Canada. In this article, we draw our findings from the first cohort of the study, which includes 67 families from Toronto, Wellington, Hamilton, Timiskaming, and Constance Lake First Nation. We continue to recruit new families from these communities in Ontario, and we have expanded the study to include families in Manitoba, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories. The families in our study live in urban, rural, and remote communities. The first interview conducted with a family occurs when their child is in the preschool years. We then invite the family to participate in subsequent annual interviews for up to six years (or when the child is in grade three).

Our purpose in the study is not to seek family opinions of services but to capture the everyday experiences of families and children as they interact with professionals in early childhood education, care, intervention, health, and family support. We are interested in the meta discourses that govern the activities of families and workers (usually produced through social policy but also via other social relationships that hold power). But perhaps of more interest to us are the ways that families are governed by the daily processes that frontline workers use to manage their work.

Our method of analysis involves creating institutional maps of services accessed by families from the time their child is born. These maps reveal how children are depicted and documented not only in terms of development and disability but also as members of their families. The maps also show how the texts used to describe children and the decisions that are made every day by frontline staff create an image

of the child. The maps are then analysed to identify where the power is held in the everyday processes of institutions, which is manifested in the work that is asked of families. We have written elsewhere about how families are asked to engage in the everyday work of programs and services, particularly when workers view the child as outside of the “norm” (Underwood, Church, & Van Rhijn, in press). We have also identified institutional maps as a mechanism to understand how systemic processes impact inclusive practice (Underwood, Smith, & Martin, 2018).

Much of the literature on inclusive practice defines inclusion as a *placement* (Nilhom & Göransson, 2017). But, through our mapping, we can define systemic inclusion in the complex ways in which professionals hold power, which is experienced differently for different families, with implications for understanding geographic disparities in access to services. We can also see colonialism embedded in the work of early childhood educators, and, perhaps most striking, how the social status of families and their communities are implicated in the everyday experience of institutional processes.

This article is primarily a conceptual paper that combines findings from the IECSS project and prior research conducted by the authors with the literature on inclusive early childhood education and care practice. It describes common values that have emerged to support changes in thinking in disability studies and early childhood inclusion. It is our hope that this knowledge will add to the public discourse by drawing attention to procedures, power, and practices as early childhood services aim to fully include all young children and families. Our focus is on factors to be considered by early childhood educators when trying to achieve an integrated, equitable, and accessible system for all children and families.

Inclusion is a human right.

Canada is a signatory of both the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC, United Nations, 1989) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD, United Nations, 2007). These conventions stipulate the right of all children to an early, inclusive education, with early identification and disability-specific support services (Underwood & Frankel, 2012). As a signatory, Canada must ensure that these international mandates are implemented through the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and local policies and programs (Noel, 2015).

Both the UNCRC and UNCRPD make statements that are relevant to children with disabilities. The UNCRC states that all children have the rights to protection, provision, and participation. Specifically, Article 23 states that children with disabilities should have access to special care and support such that they are able to live a “full and decent life” (United Nations, 1989). Further, in the UNCRPD, Article 7 states that children with disabilities should have rights equal to those of any other child, including opportunities to express their views on matters that affect them. Inclusion of children with disabilities is discussed in Article 24, which asserts that children with disabilities have equal rights to “access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” (United Nations, 2007).

Are these rights to services being upheld in Ontario? In the IECSS project, families from all jurisdictions spoke about how a diagnosis facilitated access to services, but it did not guarantee intensity or quality of

services or that long waitlists for disability services and childcare could be avoided. For many, accessing early intervention services required them to travel long distances to services only found in major centres in the province. For others, when a childcare centre would not accept their child, parents described their inability to return to work. Further inequities became evident when families spoke of the need to access private practitioners to support their child's progress, even if it was at great financial hardship for the family. When services for children with disabilities and their families are not available or are insufficient either because of onerous diagnostic or qualifying procedures, long waitlists, or services being geographically distant from the family's home, the rights of the child and family to inclusion are not being upheld (Underwood, Frankel, Spalding, & Brophy, 2018).

Inclusion is about capability.

Inclusion is more than diagnosis and placement. Although parents in our study often had months or years of "chasing the diagnosis" in order to establish their child's eligibility for specialized services, they seek a range of quality early childhood and disability services, including childcare. Many of these services do not need diagnostic information to deliver their program. The need to diagnose the child stems from a medical model of disability that defines the child by deficits and limitations. A diagnosis appears to be specific, but in reality, it is a label for conditions with diverse physiological origins that affect individuals differently (Rosenbaum & Gorter, 2012). Understanding a child through categorizations based on medical deficits does not account for other aspects of the child (Reindal, 2008), and information about a child's strengths is especially valuable for understanding the disability (Guralnick, 2017). In the IECSS study, parents reported that institutional regulations about who will and will not be served or seen often cause parents and professionals to represent the child in highly negative terms in order to gain admission to a program. When the focus is on the medical model of disability, the child's individual characteristics and capabilities may be ignored.

On the other hand, social models of disability seek to understand the social and relational constructions of disability that are critical to inclusion (Underwood, Valeo, & Wood, 2012). Underwood et al. (2012) applied the *capability* approach to early childhood inclusion. This approach posits that each individual has a unique set of capabilities that is defined as "actions or states of being that are valued by an individual" (p. 292). These capabilities can be abilities that are already gained or potentials to be realized, and an inclusive setting should provide children with the freedom to realize their potentials. This view on inclusion also takes children's rights into consideration because it focuses on what children value. Hence, a truly inclusive environment not only takes into consideration what is valued within a child's geo-political context but also does not make assumptions about what they can achieve.

Inclusion is the recognition of unique cultural, spiritual, and social identities.

An inclusive childcare or kindergarten setting does not stand alone but is embedded within a community that has cultural, spiritual, and social contexts within which a child's identity develops. Inclusive communities can provide children with disabilities opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with peers of their choosing (Underwood, 2013), and these meaningful interactions often occur naturally (Wiant, Kehler, Rempel, & Tough, 2014). It is through cultural, spiritual, and social experiences

and reciprocal relationships with others in their community that children formulate their own sense of self. This may occur in early learning and care programs when children with disabilities are provided with opportunities to make friends, engage in play, and socially interact with their peers (Koller, Le Pouesard, & Rummens, 2018; Kwon, Elicker, & Kontos, 2011).

Moreover, understanding the uniqueness of disability identity is an integral part of inclusion. Disability is a part of a child's identity and should be understood as well as supported in the context of the whole child, which includes his or her unique cultural, spiritual, and social identities. Children should be allowed the opportunity to congregate with groups of individuals like themselves through inclusion. Quality inclusive early learning and care programs and services foster children's social interactions with peers who have similar interests and worldviews. This emphasis on social interactions has origins in the social relational model of disability, which asserts that inclusion is about with whom you are interacting and about who gets to decide with whom you interact (Snoddon & Underwood, 2014).

In the IECSS study, many parents reported that they did not want a professional to "fix" their child. They enjoyed their child's unique character and temperament while professionals with more power in the service relationship were telling them the child had to change. This view of "fixing" the child has origins in the medical model of disability. It has limited utility because not all conditions can (or should) be cured, and it is difficult to pinpoint concrete causal connections between intervention and outcomes (Rosenbaum & Gorter, 2012). Further, it has underpinnings of ableism, or discrimination toward disabled people, that potentially may be learned by other children, families, and staff in programs.

In addition, families should have the ability to make choices about with whom their child interacts. However, families in our study were often told that their child could enter an early learning program or kindergarten but told at the same time that there would not be any resources for the accommodations that are the child's right. In some cases, this led to a child's attendance in segregated programs, which was not their family's intention, although families ultimately saw this as a more desirable option than sending their child to a childcare centre or kindergarten where they were not welcome. A choice that does not provide a quality inclusive service is not a true option for parents.

Inclusion is individual.

Inclusive settings also encourage the active participation of each child, which can include giving children opportunities to practice their skills, engage in physical activities, interact with their family members, have fun, and make friends (Rosenbaum & Gorter, 2012). One of the main goals of early education and care programs is to support children's learning. To achieve this goal, learning should be defined flexibly for individual learners and opportunities should be provided for children to engage in a range of learning activities that account for diverse interests and varied abilities as new skills, relationships, and power dynamics emerge in a classroom.

One way to encourage this range of learning activities is to follow the three main principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which highlight supporting diverse learners. The UDL model posits that learning can be addressed through multiple means of engagement, representation, as well as action

and expression. The dimension of engagement supports learners' motivation by harnessing their interests and fostering their effort and perseverance during learning. Using multiple ways to display the information, the representation dimension emphasizes the importance of using various languages and symbols to present the knowledge, which can support understanding and generalization of the materials learned. After grasping the notion that knowledge can be represented in different ways, learners should have opportunities to demonstrate what they know through multiple means (CAST, 2018). A UDL approach should be paired with differentiation of activities to support each child with the recognition that accommodation and accessibility need to be features of any classroom.

Individualized program planning must also recognize the likelihood that teams of professionals may be working with a child and their family. As one parent in the IECSS project reported, after her child was asked to leave a childcare centre and rejected from several other centres, she finally found an inclusive childcare program that fostered communications between her and all the professionals working with her child. As she noted, "It is so incredibly well-coordinated. And the really big thing is, because I signed the consent for e-mail, sharing of information. So, we have a nice email list between myself, the speech and language pathologist, the OT, the developmental pediatrician, the clinical resource person, and the childcare." This process highlights the importance of collaboration amongst parents and all professionals on a team providing individualised service (Frankel, Underwood, & Goldstein, 2017), but also the reality of a complex system.

Inclusion is valuing.

In a truly inclusive setting, children with disabilities are not simply tolerated; they are valued members of the classroom (Underwood et al., 2012) and their uniqueness is viewed as an asset. It is important to distinguish between toleration and inclusion because the sentiments behind those concepts are different. *Toleration* implies that children are in the classroom but are not viewed as capable of contributing positively to classroom dynamics. In contrast, children who are *included* are not only welcomed but are viewed as members who will add to the class's learning experiences. A sharp distinction in service delivery models between children with and without disabilities should not be present. Rather, all children should be viewed as unique individuals whose strengths are valued.

Moreover, inclusive educators recognize that social interactions amongst the children in the classroom are the context within which learning happens. The way educators address social dynamics in the classroom affects whether children feel that they are valued members of the classroom (Lee & Recchia, 2016). Educators grapple with the challenges of maintaining consistency within the classroom while being flexible enough to adapt to the needs of all children (Molbaek, 2018). Further, educators are working within the context of a society that values highly normative understandings of achievement and ability. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018) notes that disability is the most frequently cited grounds for discrimination in Ontario, and that significant violations of the dignity and valuing of students with disabilities are ongoing in Ontario schools.

Inclusive educators are not only knowledgeable about the strengths of the children in the class; they also value their own ability to plan activities to highlight these strengths. It has been well documented

that educators who have a positive attitude toward inclusion will more readily include children with disabilities in their classrooms. For instance, Welglarz-Wards, Santos, and Timmer (2018) investigated early intervention providers' perspectives on supports and barriers for inclusion in childcare settings. They concluded that childcare providers' willingness to have children with disabilities in their programs affects how well the children are included. Thornton and Underwood (2013) found that educators who hold beliefs aligning with the social model of disability will more likely make accommodations for children with disabilities than those whose beliefs align with the medical model. Inclusive educators will also actively seek out community resources for all children in their classrooms. Gal, Schreur, and Engel-Yeger (2010) suggest that educators not only need to possess a positive attitude, they also need to identify environmental barriers in order to provide creative solutions for inclusion.

Both pre-service and in-service training of educators play an important role in promoting inclusive practices. The pre-service education of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers has been shown to impact acceptance of inclusion. For example, Frankel, Hutchinson, Burbidge, and Minnes (2014) found that pre-service early childhood educators and elementary teacher candidates who had completed course work and practice related to children with developmental disabilities and delays expressed a positive sense of confidence and competence in teaching such children in inclusive childcare and kindergarten programs. Crawford, Stafford, Phillips, Scott, and Tucker (2014) also suggested that training and continuing education for childcare staff in caring for children with disabilities and facilitating play is important for fostering inclusion for all children.

Inclusion is forming relationships with families.

Early intervention for children with disabilities is a problem-solving process that involves the family and staff working with the family (Guralnick, 2017). From early intervention professionals' perspectives, consistent communication amongst providers and family members is crucial for inclusion (Weglarz-Ward et al., 2018). Communication is the basis of a trusting relationship between parents and professionals (Haines, Gross, Blue-Banning, Francis, & Turnbull, 2015) and is crucial for setting up consistent strategies at home and early years settings (Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech, & McConnell, 2008).

The IECSS study shows that institutional responses to disability depend on the work of families. Families describe the work they must complete to follow through on referrals, make appointments with specialists, travel to appointments (which in some jurisdictions require them to travel and leave their communities for days), maintain documentation of all contacts, identify appropriate interventions, and continue therapies at home. Much of this work is provided by mothers. This insight requires educators and professionals to be cognizant of and empathetic to the extent that families must participate to keep the system working for their child, rather than holding additional, unrealistic expectations of the family. It also highlights the power that institutions hold over families.

Family support is also critical in providing safe respites for families. But families in the IECSS study noted that even respite programs have rules and regulations that must be managed in order to gain access. One parent reported that Saturday mornings were family time spent at a community drop-in

program that she, her physically disabled preschool daughter, and her older son could attend. But as soon as her son turned seven, she was told that this centre would no longer welcome her with her son. The need for flexible and welcoming services in the community providing inclusive havens for all family members becomes paramount.

Looking Forward

The IECSS project has assisted us in understanding the role early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers play as part of a broader system of inclusive early childhood education, care, and intervention. Almost all children and families in this study at some point sought to access a childcare program either because the family was referred by a health professional who thought it would be beneficial to the child or because the parents required childcare in order to continue their employment obligations. But inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education and care programs is more than agreeing to accept and place a disabled child in a centre. Inclusion can best be achieved when it is viewed as a human right, when it allows for the expression of individual identities, when individual capabilities are honoured, when accommodations support accessibility and when teachers and families value inclusion and the contribution each can make.

Furthermore, with awareness of the complexity the system imposes on parents, educators can be more sensitive to families looking for access to childcare and kindergarten programs for their child. Compliance with institutional processes (such as intake procedures, schedules, forms, etc.) that is necessary for families to gain entry into programs can lead to discrimination through the imposition of particular ways of thinking about disability. Consideration must be given to the additional work, resources, and control educators may be imposing on parents each time they turn a family away. The relationships educators build with parents as they transition their child into a centre or kindergarten requires trust and valuing of the family and their child.

Childcare and kindergarten programs must embrace a systems view of services. Childcare programs and kindergartens are community institutions with their own eligibility requirements, rules, and regulations about who can enter, who cannot, and under what circumstances they will be supported. These processes and the services may be similar or different from every other organization with which the family interacts. Families in our study described a “quadruplet of services” that are repeated in various institutional settings across the system—speech and language therapy, occupational or physical therapy, behaviour therapy, and mental health services (Underwood & Frankel, 2018). Childcares and kindergartens have a role in providing these services within their program to eliminate the need for parents to attend at many different organizations. In collaboration with other specialists working with the child and family, adaptations can be implemented to support a child within the program. With new insights about inclusion, institutions can be transformative in visioning, designing, and implementing comprehensive services to improve interactions, eliminate power differentials, and deliver inclusive services.

Ultimately, early childhood educators can provide quality inclusive experiences for children when they work as part of a team with families, children, and other service agencies and view their contribution as a critical component of an inclusive early childhood education, care, and intervention service system, rather than merely as a placement for a child in their program. Developing a plan to transition all children into the routines and activities of an inclusive childcare centre and kindergarten is one part of working toward creating more inclusive communities.

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Slate of Nominations for the 2019-2020

AECEO Provincial Board of Directors

Profiles of the Nominees for the 2019-2020 Provincial Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Brooke Richardson M.A., Ph.D., RECE

Brooke Richardson is a Post-Doctoral Fellow and adjunct faculty at Brock University, Department of Sociology. She completed her B.A. and M.A. in Early Childhood Studies and a Ph.D. in Policy Studies at Ryerson. Her current SSHRC-funded research problematizes the increasing privatization of the childcare sector from a feminist, ethics of care perspective. Brooke has published and presented nationally and internationally on topics including: the Canadian childcare advocacy movement, the role of early childhood education students in political mobilization, the systemic devaluation of care in neoliberal political climates and the representation of childcare in mainstream media. Brooke also is an early childhood music educator (certified in Suzuki, Orff, Kodaly and Dalcroze) and a mother of 4 young children. Brooke is motivated by her belief that high quality, affordable childcare, delivered by a well compensated professional workforce, is necessary to actualize women, children and family's basic rights.

TREASURER

Shannon Sveda MA, RECE

Shannon Sveda has a diploma in early childhood education from Sheridan College. She also completed Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in early childhood studies at Ryerson University.

Shannon is passionate about supporting Early Childhood Educators in their pursuit of professional learning, with a special interest in their pursuit of a reflective and intentional practice. As such, her Master's research

focused on blogging in a virtual learning community as a form of continuous professional learning.

Over the past decade Shannon has had the opportunity to work in a variety of early childhood education and care settings, including licensed child care, early intervention, and post-secondary education. Most recently Shannon has shifted her professional focus to engaging children and their families outdoors, through Nature Play experiences (suitedandbooted.ca). She is also involved in the ECE community as the alumni relations chair of the Ryerson Early Childhood Studies MA Alumni Association, and through social media as @CanadianECE.

CO-SECRETARY

Lyndsay Macdonald, RECE, B.A., MA ECS

Lyndsay Macdonald has an MA in Early Childhood Studies from Ryerson University. She has worked in a number of early childhood education and child care (ECEC) settings in Ontario, as well as in Australia. Previously the AECEO Coordinator, Lyndsay is currently a faculty member of Humber College, teaching ECE, and has also worked as a policy researcher at the Childcare Resource and Research Unit and as part-time coordinator for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. Lyndsay is a passionate leader who believes in the central role of ECEs in the broader ECEC advocacy movement. She believes that the AECEO plays an integral role in uniting and representing ECEs and is committed to promoting the recognition, support and remuneration of ECEs in Ontario.

CO-SECRETARY

Laura Coulman RECE, MSC, Ph.D. Candidate

Laura Coulman has been a proud ECE since graduating from Ryerson's Early Childhood Education program in the early 1990s. She completed her MSc in Child Studies at the

University of Guelph and is currently a PhD Candidate of the Faculty of Education, Western University. She knows that the AECEO can play an important role in unlocking the potential of early childhood education as a truly integrated entity of education; an entity in which RECEs are highly valued practitioners who design, lead, and deliver the system that serves young children in Ontario. Laura believes that moving early childhood education programs beyond their current format of being overly-privatized and often inadequately planned; tenuously funded; and inequitably delivered, to a totally new and completely remodeled system for all is not utopian thinking. For Laura, the system re-design that is still needed should be made by early childhood educators – and, for her, it just makes sense that the AECEO, as the professional association of RECEs in Ontario, continues to lead the way in carving out this path.

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Nicole Cummings RECE, B.A.Sc.

Nicole Cummings is a RECE who graduated from Seneca College of Applied Arts & Technology. After years of working in a variety of child care positions, her love for learning lead her to Guelph-Humber for a B.A.Sc. in Child Studies where she recently graduated. As she embarks on a new journey of learning in the OISE's Masters of Child Studies program, she is confident that all of this learning will be beneficial to her role as an AECEO board member. As a workshop facilitator, she has been able to share information with parents on the importance of their role as their child's first advocate, and she encourages their responsibility to join our fight for Universal Child Care in Ontario. As a board member she is also dedicated to reaching as many ECE's with the many reasons why, 'ECE'S ARE EXCELLENT!' and why standing together to achieve professional pay will be the best way to get it!

Priscilla Dutt, BA (ECE), MAECS, RECE

Priscilla has a degree in Early Childhood Education with a Minor in Sociology (Ryerson University), a degree in Education Primary/Junior Division (OISE), a Certificate in Infant Mental Health (York University) and a Masters in Early Childhood Studies (Ryerson University). She has worked in multi-service community-based agencies

for over 10 years. Priscilla is currently a Professor in the School of Early Childhood Education at Centennial College. Priscilla has developed a strong sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in the fields of early learning and family supports.

Ruth Houston RECE, AECEO.C, BCD, MA

Ruth Houston is the Program Manager for York Child Development & Family Services in Newmarket. YCD is a multi-service agency operating licensed childcare, EarlyOn and CAPC programs in York Region. Ruth graduated from Georgian College with an ECE diploma in the early 1980s and returned to school in 2009 obtaining an Honours Bachelor of Child Development from Seneca College followed by an MA in Early Childhood Studies from Ryerson University. She is a long standing certified member of the AECEO and an active member of the Early Learning community in York Region. Issues of public advocacy pertaining to universal, accessible, not-for-profit and inclusive childcare, professionalization and compensation for RECEs are topics of great interest. Ruth has served on many committees within York Region including the Early Years Steering Committee, Enhanced Funding Standing Committee, School Age and Quality Assurance Subcommittees of the York Region Child & Family Collaborative. She was the chair of the York Branch of the AECEO for many years and remains committed to the work of the AECEO. Ruth provides professional development and consulting services to early learning programs and has a solid understanding of the changes occurring in the early learning and care sector.

Shona Mills, RECE, BECL, MA ECS

Shona Mills is a professional RECE and recent graduate of Ryerson University Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies (MA ECS) program. Her work in the profession includes home and licensed early learning and care (ELC) program. During her Bachelor of Early Childhood Leadership (BECL) through Sheridan College, Shona became a passionate advocate for RECE and universal ELC. Throughout both her BECL and MA ECS her research focused on pathways to advocacy from the perspective of RECE and other ELC advocates. Along with colleagues from Halton Region Shona established one of the AECEO Communities of Practice, the Halton Advocates for Quality

Child Care. As a woman and mother of five daughters she understands the importance of RECE in community. She continues to advocate through micro, meso, and macro levels to challenge the current market approach to ELC, with the hope to create meaningful change that puts RECE, children, families at the heart of our communities.

The major issues Shona foresees facing the AECEO include (1) the Ford Administration, (2) low membership, and (3) no commitment to build a universal ELC system from the Trudeau Administration, and the 2019 Federal election. The Ford Administration holds a majority government that is creating ELC policy that stretches care and perpetuates a market approach with a focus on unlicensed home child care providers, grandparents, nanny's etc. Additionally, the AECEO faces low membership, given the current political context it is vital to create a strategic plan that not only challenges governance but builds the voice of RECE through the AECEO. Finally, without a commitment to create a universal ELC system from the Trudeau Administration in the Federal budget the AECEO may find we are lobbying for universal ELC during and after the federal election.

Kesha Murray RECE, AECEO.C

Kesha is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and a proud graduate of Centennial College. She is also a graduate of George Brown College –Child Care Management program. Kesha has been working in the field over 20 years, 19 of which have been with the YMCA of Greater Toronto and the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region. In addition, she has also been a certified member with the AECEO for the majority of her career.

Kesha has worked directly with children for over 20 years, however, the past 14 years; she has been a Senior Program Coordinator. Most recently, she has been involved with training, mentoring and coaching Early Childhood Educators in providing quality child care programs.

Kesha's first exposure to Advocacy was as a volunteer with the AECEO while she was a student at Centennial College. As a member of the Coalition for Better Child Care, she has seen first-hand the important work the coalition has done for Early Childhood Educators.

Kesha is a strong advocate for child care workers in achieving their Early Childhood Education diploma. She

also believes that professionally trained and educated child care workers play a vital role in child development and quality programming.

Kesha is committed to using her skills and experience to further enhance change in the field for Early Childhood Educators, children and their families.

Amy O'Neil, B.A., RECE

Amy O'Neil has been involved with children and families for over 25 years in both Montreal and Toronto and is a passionate advocate for children and those who care for them. Through lived experience, Amy's commitment to social and economic justice is both personal and political. A mother of four and a vocal advocate for childcare, Amy is often deputing on behalf of low income working parents on child care issues. She believes passionately in social justice and quality in early childhood settings and strongly supports decent work for RECE's.

After receiving her B.A. in Educational Studies with Honors specializing in Child Studies from Concordia University she began practice directly with young children and their families as an Early Childhood Educator in Montreal. She understands the dynamic of the early childhood environment and has extensive experience in community development and capacity building. Amy aspires to work with the AECEO in strategic planning and collaborative leadership. Amy works as the Director of Treetop Children's Centre where her focus, along with managing day-to-day operations, is to strengthen the quality of programming by incorporating the latest in educational methodology and pedagogy. She is a Board member of the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, has served as a Director on a child care Board of Directors, and works in varying capacities in the early learning sector in Toronto including sitting on committees with Toronto Children's Services and the TDSB. She is excited to share her commitment to child and family advocacy and her experience of successful, non-profit, front-line and management experience in child care with the AECEO.

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Ph.D

Veronica's notable contributions to childhood studies (currently, as contributor to and principle investigator of Common World Childhoods Research Collective, Early Childhood Pedagogies Collaboratory, and Transforming

Waste Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education; as co-director of the Ontario Centre of Excellence in Early Years and Child Care; as professor of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education at Western University; and as author and co-editor of many publications in Early Childhood Education and pedagogy), and her demonstrated capacity for understanding the complex challenges of practice and provisions of early childhood education and care in Ontario are characteristics that make her an ideal candidate for the AECEO Board of Directors. As ECEs in Ontario continue to experience instability in their wages and working conditions, despite encouraging emphasis on practice and deepening interest in pedagogy; Veronica sees the major issues of the AECEO to be beginning conversations regarding how professional pay and decent work can be moved alongside pedagogical discourses.

Alana Powell, RECE, HBA, MA-ECS

Alana Powell is an RECE and holds an HBA in Political Science from the University of Toronto and an MA in Early Childhood Studies from Ryerson University. Alana's commitment to advocating for ECEs and childcare in Ontario was reinforced by her experiences working in the field at a non-profit community-based childcare centre and as the AECEO's Interim Coordinator in 2018. She believes the ECE workforce's knowledge and experience is crucial in achieving informed policy change in Ontario.

She is committed to building the collective voice of ECEs and looks forward to continuing to work with the ECE community across the province and supporting the important work of the AECEO.

Jenn Wallage, B.A.A., RECE, RC

Jenn Wallage has been an Early Childhood Educator since graduating from the ECE Diploma program at Conestoga College over 20 years ago. From Conestoga she went to Ryerson Polytechnic University, graduating with her Bachelor of Applied Arts in Early Childhood Education. While at Ryerson she earned her designation in Special Needs, as well as a minor in Public Administration. Regardless of where she worked (as a classroom educator, at the Ontario Early Years, as a Resource Consultant, to name a few), Jenn has always been a strong advocate for the profession of Early Childhood Education. She is currently employed with a school board as a Designated Early Childhood Educator, fulfilling a position outside of the Kindergarten classroom – as a Union Local President representing over 650 DECEs. Jenn is very involved at the Local and Provincial levels with her Union. This involvement is what led her to become involved with the AECEO, collaborating and advocating for the profession of Early Childhood Education. Jenn wholeheartedly believes that growing support from all areas will benefit the Early Childhood Education profession in the quest for professional pay and working conditions.

SAVE THE DATE

AECEO Annual Meeting 2019

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario will hold its Annual Meeting of Members on June 18th, 2019. The online AGM provides an opportunity to engage with Provincial Board and candidates and to be involved in the governance of the Association.

Tuesday, June 18 @ 6:30 p.m.

Where: Online via Zoom meetings

Further details will be distributed prior to the AGM.



Make your Continuous Professional Learning Portfolio the best it can be!

Looking for additional opportunities that will support your continuous professional learning journey and help you to create an outstanding portfolio?

Want to get a head start on documenting your required professional learning as a member of the College of ECE?

Find out how to develop a first-rate professional portfolio; what you should include and why, and how to best reflect your practice and learning. The AECEO's online resources, Module 1-Professionalism and Portfolio Development; and Module 2-Professional E-Portfolio Development will help you with this important step in your career as a Registered Early Childhood Educator.

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario:

For more information about the AECEO Certification Process or to register for the modules visit: www.aeceo.ca.

Grow two trees with one seed! These modules are not only outstanding professional development resources on their own they can also be used toward becoming AECEO Certified.

The AECEO Certification process supports reflective practice, improves professional skills, and reinforces the values and beliefs that led RECEs to this work. It enables RECEs to demonstrate that they remain current, can respond to personal and professional challenges, and continue to learn.





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