

Position Paper

Early Childhood Education Review
November 2014



Nova Scotia Child Care Association
L'association des services de garde à
l'enfance de la Nouvelle-Ecosse

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Nova Scotia Child Care Association

Position Paper Early Childhood Education Review

Nova Scotia Child Care Association/ L'association des services de garde à l'enfance de la Nouvelle-Ecosse (NSCCA/ASGENE) understands and supports current initiatives by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in their review of Early Childhood Education in Nova Scotia. We look forward to working with Minister Casey and her team as we move towards a stronger system for program and delivery for Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Educators, children and families. NSCCA is confident that we can contribute to achieving both NSCCA and Nova Scotia Department of Education & Early Childhood Development shared goals.

The Nova Scotia Child Care Association/ L'association des services de garde à l'enfance de la Nouvelle-Ecosse (NSCCA/ASGENE) believes that Early Childhood Educators are the key to a quality Early Childhood Education program. We represent and serve members from a diverse collective regardless of their work place or chosen career. Our membership is inclusive of all cultures and communities and can be found throughout the entire early years sector including Early Childhood Educators who work in urban or rural centres, nonprofit centres, private centres, early intervention, family resource centres, early years centres, early childhood resource support centres, post-secondary training programs, family home agencies, retired practitioners. As a membership based organization we strive to do our best in ensuring that the voices of all Early Childhood Educators are represented as that key ingredient in quality Early Childhood Education.

It is the position of the Nova Scotia Child Care Association/ L'association des services de garde à l'enfance de la Nouvelle-Ecosse that the current delivery for Early Childhood Education in the Province of Nova Scotia does not meet the majority of the needs of Early Childhood Educators, families, children, or communities.

The NSCCA recommends that the following five areas be considered when completing a review of Early Childhood Education.

It is the position of NSCCA/ASGENE that:

- 1. Quality Early Childhood Education must be delivered by trained Early Childhood Educators**

High quality Early Childhood Education is best achieved through Early Childhood Educators who are trained continuous learners. Resource available at:

http://www.worklifecanada.ca/cms/resources/files/4/ybic_report_2_en.pdf Page 82-83

Challenges

a. Classification system

- **Recommendation:** Phase out untrained staff and equivalency

b. Day Care Act and Regulations

- **Recommendation:** Review the Day Care Act and Regulations to support trained Early Childhood Educators as the primary providers of quality Early Childhood Education. As of May 1, 2012 the NS Day Care Act and Regulations requires only 2/3 of staff working in child care centres have training or equivalency (level 1-3). All Early Childhood Educators working directly with children should be Level 2 or 3.

c. Inconsistent training requirements

- **Recommendation:** Develop a set curriculum for training in post-secondary programs offering a diploma/degree in Early Childhood Education, increase entrance requirements.

d. Confusion between Certification of practice and Classification of post-secondary credentials for licensing

- **Recommendation:** One method of ensuring that practice is consistent and meets standards is through voluntary certification of practice through the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators NS (CCECENS). ECEs, and the general public are not generally knowledgeable regarding the certification of practice process nor its benefits to the practitioner as well as the practice. We recommend support, promotion and funding to make Certification of practice through the Certification Council of ECE accessible to all Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia.

2. Early Childhood Educators must be held accountable to an occupational standard of practice and Code of Ethics in a mentoring culture.

The Nova Scotia Child Care Association is developing services and processes to ensure that all Members of the NSCCA adhere to the NSCCA Code of Ethics, the Child Care Human Resource Sector Council's Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators, and have their certification of practice through the CCECENS.

Challenges

a. Not all ECEs in Nova Scotia are members of the NSCCA

- **Recommendation:** A system for Early Childhood Education must include regulations where Early Childhood Educators are held accountable to standards of practice and a professional code of ethics.

b. *Recruitment and Retention*

- **Recommendation:** Encourage and support a mentoring culture and the application of ethics in practice throughout Nova Scotia, which will assist ECEs in professional growth and development. Retention is crucial in the first five years of an ECE's career.

c. *Rural vs Urban*

- **Recommendation:** That the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development work in partnership with the Nova Scotia Child Care Association, Certification Council of ECE Nova Scotia, Centre provincial de ressources préscolaires (CPRPS) and Early Childhood Development Support Centres (NSCC/IHSE) to discuss options in developing a framework that will address the needs of all Early Childhood Educators across the province.

3. Early Childhood Educators must be recognized as the key ingredient to providing quality Early Childhood Education programs

The NSCCA believes that those individuals providing Early Childhood Education to children birth to five years are considered as Early Childhood Educators and the education and care for children birth to five years be considered as Early Childhood Education.

Challenges

a. *There is inconsistency in the nomenclature for the sector. The term “child care” and those individuals providing quality “child care” do not have consistent meaning in the public or within the sector.*

- **Recommendation:** Trained practitioners providing education and care to children 0-5 be referred to as Early Childhood Educators
- **Recommendation:** Untrained practitioners supporting education and care for children 0-5 be referred to as Early Childhood Assistants
- **Recommendation:** The act of providing education and care for children 0-5 be referred to as Early Childhood Education
- **Recommendation:** The review should include an exploration of the ECE nomenclature respecting and supporting the sector in developing its own words and meanings this being one of the criteria for a profession.
- **Recommendation:** A study on the feasibility of ECE gaining professional recognition either through regulation or through sector self-regulation be part of the review. Identification of what currently exists to support professional recognition and including what is in the process of being developed, and what needs to be developed

4. Early Childhood Educators must be well trained, fairly compensated, and supported through a stable and professional workforce, in their provision of quality programming

NSCCA has a vision of a stable, professional, well paid and well trained workforce that is supported in offering high quality early childhood education to children and families. We believe that the damaging

impact of low wages must be made clearly visible so that planned growth in the licensed system does not happen on the backs of underpaid early childhood educators.

Challenges

a. Recruitment and retention of trained Early Childhood Educators

- **Recommendation:** A work description for both ECE and Early Childhood Centre administrator was developed by CCCNS and as part of a national project it was rated by a Federal rater. (2000, <http://www.cccns.org/pdf/JD.pdf>) We ask that this be rated by your department with your work classification system to determine the value of ECE work.
- **Recommendation:** When the value is determined we recommend that a comparative worth study be conducted to establish targets for parity with other positions in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

b. Grant Funding- Early Childhood Educator salaries are impacted by the fact that parent fees (including subsidies and grants) are the primary source of income for an Early Childhood Program. Fees are affected by all the following factors:

- The low cap on income assistance for families
- No increase in the per diem rates for subsidies
- Portable subsidy system
- Grants tied to enrolment
- Affordability for Families

- **Recommendation:** Develop a long term plan incorporating core funding that promotes quality Early Childhood Education that is delivered by Early Childhood Educators who are recognized for their value and remunerated as such. Examine the effectiveness of a standardized salary scale tied to the grant funding conditions. NSCCA has developed a salary scale for your consideration.

5. High quality Early Childhood Education is best achieved through Early Childhood Educators who engage in continuous growth and development.

We know that learning is a life-long self-motivated commitment. The NSCCA provides a wide range of quality professional development to Early Childhood Educators to support them in their continuous growth. We value and encourage ongoing professional development as a key indicator of enhancing and maintain quality in practice for Early Childhood Educators.

Challenges

a. Quality of Professional Development offered

- **Recommendation:** Involve NSCCA in reviewing current guidelines for recognized PD opportunities
- **Recommendation:** Establish a sector mechanism to coordinate and enhance the content and delivery of professional development opportunities.

b. Classification process

- **Recommendation:** Review the Classification process including renewal time and accumulation of PD hours

c. Over saturation of Professional Development opportunities

- **Recommendation:** Develop a guideline for recognized Professional Development opportunities

Thank you for the opportunity to present you with our recommendations of some factors to be included in the review. We look forward to continued dialogue, consultation and participation in this worthwhile initiative.

Respectfully Submitted by

Nova Scotia Child Care Association Board of Directors

Nova Scotia Child Care Association

Our Organization

Nova Scotia Child Care Association/ L'association des services de garde à l'enfance de la Nouvelle-Ecosse (NSCCA/ASGENE) is a non-profit organization of Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia. In 2003, after a twelve year development period the Child Care Professional Association Development Society, CCPADS transferred its assets to a newly incorporated Society the Nova Scotia Child Care Association.

NSCCA's foundation is the recognition that Early Childhood Educators are the most important ingredient in high quality Early Childhood Education, and the services they provide to society are extremely valuable. With partner organizations, including the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia, and Centre provincial de ressources préscolaires, the organization works to achieve professional recognition for all Early Childhood Educators.

Our Vision

The NSCCA recognizes that Early Childhood Educators are the main ingredient in the provision of high quality Early Childhood Education~ Quality Early Childhood Education through Quality Early Childhood Educators. NSCCA is dedicated to increasing the recognition of the important role Early Childhood Educators play in providing quality programs for Nova Scotia's children and families.

Our Goals and What we do to Support our Goals

1. Ethical Practice

To educate and facilitate the ethical practice of our members and support our members in applying ethics to their work.

On a daily basis Early Childhood Educators are faced with decisions where the welfare of children and colleagues is at stake, where others are affected by decisions made. Caring for Nova Scotia's children is a huge responsibility and requires that practice is ethical.

The NSCCA Code of Ethics provides guidelines for responsible behaviour as an Early Childhood Educator. The Code of Ethics provides consideration that is needed to refer to when making ethical decisions. The code includes a process for applying an ethical decision making process when considering the best decision to make when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Partners In Practice Mentoring Skills Series

- Introduction to Mentoring;
- Mentoring Partner Tools;
- Temperament and Mentoring;
- Ethical Decision Making in Mentoring;
- Becoming a Reflective Practitioner;
- Mentoring and Adult Development; and
- Facilitating Reflective Practice

Ongoing Professional Development in Support of Ethical Practice:

- *Ethical Decision Making and Mentoring: Using the NSCCA Code of Ethics to Guide Our Practice and the Partners in Practice Mentoring Series*, training has been completed by six Members who will co-facilitate the workshop beginning in the Spring of 2015 making it accessible to as many NSCCA members and other practitioners as possible. These modules put ethical decision making into the mentor-protégé context, provides tools for them to identify ethical dilemmas and to find the best answer within the context of the relationship.

2. Standards of Practice

To educate and facilitate the use of standards of practice in our members.

In 2000, the Canadian Child Care Federation published *Partners in Quality: Tools for Practitioners in Child Care Settings- Standards of Practice* (Doherty, 2000). The NSCCA has adopted these Standards of Practice as the NSCCA Standards. In 2010 the *Child Care Human Resource Sector Council released Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators*. At that time the NSCCA adopted these occupational standards in conjunction with the Partners in Quality Standards of Practice as it was developed with new updated research in the profession. These Standards serve as the foundation upon which to build quality of practice among Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Educators.

- Members of NSCCA are expected to adhere to the Occupational Standards of Practice as part of the commitment to the purpose of the association.
- NSCCA uses the Occupational Standards and Standards of Practice as a foundation for professional development activities for its members to continuously improve the quality of care they provide to children.

Ongoing Professional Development in Support of Standards of Practice:

- **Annual Conference and Trade Show (June):** In 2007, the four provincial organization which focus on ECE's practice successfully convened *Set Sail for Quality on an Ocean of Caring*, the 2007 national child care conference for the Canadian Child Care Federation. Building on this success, the four conveners (Child Care Connection NS, Certification council of Early Childhood Educators of NS, Centre Provincial de ressources preschoolaire and NSCCA) began to convene the annual child care conference in June. When CCCNS began winding down, NSCCA agreed to take the lead in ensuring that the conference would continue and the remaining convening partners agreed. NSCCA increased its conference responsibilities over 2007-2013. The NS Department of Community Services agreed that funding in CCCNS service

agreement from NSDCS which assisted in delivering this conference would be transferred to NSCCA when CCCNS closed. With the transition from the Department of Community Services to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in 2014 the NSCCA received that funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to support the annual Conference and Trade Show, which was delivered in June 2014 titled *Inspired Educators: Inspiring Classrooms*.

- **Mental Health in the Early Years Fall Conference:** In the fall of 2013, NSCCA, along with its partners and sponsors Mount Saint Vincent University and the IWK Health Centre, Margaret and Wallace McCain delivered a two day conference on Mental Health in the Early Years to over 500 participants across the disciplines of health, social services, education, and early childhood education. As a result of this success, NSCCA provided a second conference in October 2014. A relationship with Mount Saint Vincent University, the IWK and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation has been established and each have offered to support ongoing mental health professional development initiatives organized by the NSCCA. We believe this is an important topic that brings professionals from all disciplines together, building a network and multi skilled opportunities for all to learn from one another, therefore allowing all to provide optimal care and opportunities to Nova Scotia's children and families.

3. Support & Advocacy

To advocate and support our members in their provision of quality child care.

Recognition and Support Activities

- **Videos** promoting the value of child care work: NSCCA created two videos showcasing the importance of high quality Early Childhood Education programs, a video highlighting the impact on society if there were no child care available in Nova Scotia, and a video encouraging Early Childhood Educators to stand up and be proud of who they are as ECE professionals. All videos are available for viewing on our YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/user/NSCCA2012/videos>
- **Website:** NSCCA's Website provides members and others with organizational information, resources, events, membership materials etc. We are currently in the process of having our website translated into French. www.nschildcareassociation.org
- **Awards and Recognition Activities**
 - *Awards and Recognition Gala:* as part of the annual conference in June, this event puts the spotlight on a number of individuals and program which are exemplary. Among the awards are:
 - Early Childhood Learning and Care (ECLC) Awards of Excellence for practice and for program, a juried award for a program and a practitioner.
 - Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) 20 + Service Awards for licensed programs which have been providing child care services to children and families for 20 years or more
 - ECE Commitment to Care Service Award – service award for practitioners who have been practicing for 5 or more years.

- *Child Care Awareness Days*: CCAD Activities are carried out in HRM by NSCCA and in partnership with the early childhood development support centres outside of HRM. HRM will take the lead on archiving Caring at Work awards, and supporting the regions in their CCAD activities.

HRM and provincial activities organized by the NSCCA:

- Flag Raising and Provincial Proclamation Signing at Province House
- Children’s Parade and Concert in the Park
- Those from across the province who have received *Caring at Work Awards* are recognized at the annual June Conference & Trade Show

Advocacy Activities

- **Worthy Wage Initiatives**: NSCCA has a vision of a stable, professional, well paid and well trained workforce that is supported in offering high quality early learning and child care to children and families. The Worthy Wage Project includes:
 - *Minimum Salary Guidelines* (Appendix B): This tool assists child care programs in determining a fair and equitable salary based on occupational standards and a classification system that recognizes education, experience and career progression. It is useful in assessing the full cost of quality and the public investment needed to ensure a quality based early learning and child care system. NSCCA urges individuals and centres to advocate for, and work toward adopting, this minimum salary guideline. Centres can adapt it to reflect job titles and responsibilities that exist in their programs and advertise their use of the scale to help recruit qualified staff.
 - *Worthy Wage Day Activities* (May 1) Members are supported and assisted in holding activities to advocate for remuneration that is commensurable with the value of work they provide. www.nschildcareassociation.org
- **Advisory Council**: The Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of the NSCCA to provide support, advice and resources to the NSCCA’s Provincial Early Years Partnership representatives. www.nschildcareassociation.org/advisory-council/
- **ECE Matters Awareness Parade**- Province wide parade and family fun day taking place simultaneously across the province to raise public awareness on Early Childhood Education

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Early Childhood Educators: The Head, Heart and Hands of Early Childhood Education

Head- Intellect, skills and knowledge of our members, and NSCCA’s philosophy and intention to reach our goals.

Heart- Caring for ourselves, our colleagues, families and children

Hands- The quality in practice we strive for, and our courage to take action with limited resources