

December 5, 2005

Open letter to school districts in BC in response to their expanded mandate to focus on early learning and literacy in children 0 – 6.

(Vancouver) – Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC), is a member-based organization whose members consist of childcare providers who hold a license to practice, ECE students, Administrative Directors, ECE instructors and Professionals who work in related fields.

We have been serving the Early Childhood Community since 1969 and represent over 700 Early Childhood Educators in B.C.

ECEBC would like to take this opportunity to communicate with you about the Liberal government's recent decision to expand the mandate of the Ministry of Education to include early learning and literacy for children 0 – 6 years. ECEBC, along with many early childhood advocacy groups in the province, has serious concerns about the ramifications of this decision.

The early childhood community believes that quality early childhood programs do provide the ideal early learning and literacy opportunities for children in the preschool years. Quality young children's programs, including daycares, family childcare programs and preschools create play-based learning environments (including educated and qualified Early Childhood Educators) that stimulate social, physical, language, imaginative, cognitive and emotional development of young children. Literacy and cognitive learning are woven throughout the curriculum in an intentional and comprehensive way, but not isolated as the only important aspects of development. The government decision to split early learning from child care creates a public perception that is false and undermines and fragments early childhood development services.

In the document "What the EDI is (not)" by Hillel Goelman and Clyde Hertzman, the benefits of the ECE curricular focus is described: "It seems to us that many who are not in the field of ECE do not yet understand that research has shown that play-based, child-focused, developmentally and culturally appropriate approaches to learning and development in the early years are the most successful programs both in short- and the long-term." (Goelman and Hertzman, 2005, p. 3)

"The foundation of early childhood education and pedagogy is brain development and learning. All developmental domains influence brain development and while the young child's brain is adaptable, it is also vulnerable. Environmental experiences that match the developmental level of the child are most advantageous to optimum brain development." (Pollard, 2005) Developmental Psychologists have identified that emotional development and regulation, social skills, and the ability to attend and focus are equally important to early school readiness and success as literacy and cognitive abilities. "A program that allows the child to make connections between his or her lived experience and symbolic or representational knowledge, becomes the foundation for future understandings." (Pollard, 2005) The isolation and specific focus on literacy and 'school readiness' is counter to evidence based research that identifies a play based approach as the optimum environment for the holistic development of the child in the 0 – 6 age range.

Training and education for Early Childhood Educators includes a specific focus on child development and the creation of programs that maximize early development in play based and developmentally appropriate ways. We strongly feel that programming delivered to preschool

aged children should be developed and delivered by individuals holding an early childhood license to practice in BC.

An article titled, “Take Back the Language: Appreciating the Culture of ECE”, was written by members of the BC Early Childhood Education Provincial Articulation Committee in May 2004, and published in the most recent journal of ECEBC, The Early Childhood Educator. We include this article for your perusal and highlight the recommendations at the end of the article:

As communities examine new initiatives to ensure that all children have access to early childhood experiences that support early development, we strongly recommend:

1. The intent of preschool programs in schools should be to provide access to children who would not have access to preschool experiences. These programs should not replace preschools in the community, child care centres, or family child care homes. They should collaborate with the existing early childhood care and education community.
2. School boards contemplating preschool initiatives in schools should do so in partnership with early childhood educators in the immediate area. Committees that comprise kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators should collaborate to develop this curriculum.
3. Preschool programs in schools should be staffed by licensed early childhood educators and comply with Child Care Licensing regulation of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act.

We include list of local representatives from the ECEBC association who hold an Early Childhood license to practice. We hope that you take the opportunity to contact the early childhood community in your area and find out what is already in place and develop additional programming only in collaboration with these individuals.

Please don't hesitate to contact ECEBC with any questions or concerns as a result of this letter. Our goal is to build the foundation of a more collaborative, better researched and mutually respectful partnership that includes the early childhood education sector in the pursuit of healthy early childhood learning and care.

Respectfully,

Diane Tannahill,
President
ECEBC

Toni Hoyland
President Elect
ECEBC

CC Minister Stan Hagen
Minister of State Linda Reid
Minister Shirley Bond
Carol James Leader of the Opposition
Adrian Dix
Diane Thorn
John Horgan