

# Early Childhood Educator Workforce Strategy

2021-2022



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In the “Everyone at their best...from the start” New Brunswick envisioned an early learning and child care system of high quality that families can rely on and where every child receives appropriate services enabling them to reach their full potential. The success of the New Brunswick Early Learning Centre designation provides a strong foundation for the continued transformation of New Brunswick’s early learning and child care system. New Brunswick’s overarching goal is to create a culture of continuous quality improvement, whereby operators and educators are actively engaged in the process to move beyond the minimum legislative requirements.

Every day, early childhood educators shape the learning environments for children. As an educator, understanding how children learn is critical to supporting children’s overall development and well-being. It is well documented that educators with more formal education and specialised early childhood training provide more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children. Further that, on-going professional learning has been identified as one of the strongest predictors of process quality, which in turn has been demonstrated to positively influence children’s emerging literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their behavioral and social skills. The very important role played by educators must be supported and they must have opportunities to continuously build on their competencies. There is now evidence that qualified early childhood educators are better able to sustain enriching and stimulating interactions with children than those with lower qualifications.

New Brunswick’s participation in the OECD Starting Strong VI – Quality Beyond Regulations has reinforced that “early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals” are key agents for assuring the quality of an ECEC system. Initial education of ECEC staff is one of the most important determinants of quality in ECEC, and among the main features that can be regulated or changed through policies to improve the quality of ECEC provision.

Not only is there recognition of the critical role early childhood educators play in the determination of quality learning experiences for children, they are the most important element of the early learning and childcare system. During the pandemic, the province has seen an average of close to 40% of staff turnover which has impacted the capacity for service providers to deliver high quality services. That is why now is the time to build strategies for the retention of qualified staff, to support their professional learning and to promote the profession.

In an effort to drive quality, the training requirements for early childhood educators were increased in the Early Childhood Services Act. Currently, legislation requires that 50% of educators in each facility and the Administrators have a minimum of their one-year Early Childhood Education Certificate. It also requires that early childhood educators without recognized training have completed the “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” online course offered free of charge by government. Given the high turnover rate, facilities are struggling to meet these requirements.

# Consultations



The Childcare Review Task Force (August 2016) provided recommendations to leverage existing services and set the roadmap for the future. A recent survey of early childhood educators (May 2021) asked respondents to rate the significance of the recommendations of the Childcare Review Task Force. There is a strong desire for professional recognition to advance their profession. To that end, educators overwhelmingly reaffirmed the importance of a robust profession by having a regulated professional association to promote their profession, to be the voice with government and to regulate the standards of practice. Early Childhood Educators also recommended using the process of certification and pay equity to determine a wage scale.

Early Childhood Educators further voiced the necessity to change the traditional practices for formal learning and that in fact, their professional learning must allow them to continue to work while studying. This would allow them to make a living while increasing their credentials. Moreover, combining work and study would afford them the

opportunity to practice what they learn. There is a desire from Early Childhood Educators to also have their years of experience and professional development to be recognized and to play a significant role in determining their competencies. This was reinforced by early learning and childcare operators.

Educators also provided additional insight into their views respecting professional recognition, professional learning, both initial and ongoing, and recruitment and retention. In fact, the majority of respondents to the survey ranked the following as key to recruitment and retention of qualified educators (in order of importance): having competitive wages, access to health and pension plans, having better working conditions, having public recognition and access to professional training and support. Their perspectives will inform possibilities and priorities towards establishing a professional pathway for New Brunswick's early childhood educator workforce.

# New Brunswick’s Early Childhood Educator Workforce Strategy

Since 2017, New Brunswick has begun the journey to transform its early childhood education system through a robust public policy framework with outstanding success. There are two main reasons for this success. Firstly, New Brunswick’s action plan presented a comprehensive approach to move quality at the same time as increasing access to affordable services. Secondly, while government built a model for this transformation, the details were co-constructed with Operators and Parents

to ensure that it was responsive to the reality on the ground. This is the preferred approach as we build the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Strategy for New Brunswick.

While the funding for this strategy is for one year, it is the intent to leverage this opportunity to address the dire need for increased access to formal training and to build longevity for recruitment and retention of qualified educators.



# Innovative Professional Learning

Given the high turnover rate of the previous year, the province will focus on providing an increased access to professional learning opportunities for early childhood educators who need to complete their one year Early Childhood Education Certificate, while working. This will include increased access to the online “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” course, as well as the provision of innovative work-study models for those who are required to complete their college ECE certificate. This online mandatory course provides initial training on our early learning curriculum frameworks. This means that all early childhood educators receive training on inclusion and diversity, as described under the Early Childhood Services Act.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work in close partnership with the New Brunswick Community College/Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick to deliver two innovative professional training models. The availability of these innovative training opportunities will be for all licenced early learning and childcare facilities offering services to preschool age children (0-5) no matter where they are located in the province. However, priority will be given to facilities that currently do not meet the legislated training requirements:

**1. Micro credentialing - Experiential :** This onsite training to obtain the one year college certificate will be offered to educators who have worked for a minimum of three years in a licensed early learning and childcare facility with children under the age of 5 and who have completed the “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” course. This program will allow educators to work in child care centres while demonstrating experiential practices to gain recognition and participating in theoretical training modules to demonstrate their skills. This program is 6 to 8 months in length.

**2. Integrated Work-Study Program:** This program will allow two untrained educators from the same designated center to complete their one-year college training while continuing to work. The two educators will alternate their time: a block of online training at home or at college and then a block of work (example: 8 weeks in training, 8 weeks working). This will allow them to apply their learnings and build their competencies throughout their training. This program requires two years to complete. These educators who have a minimum of three years of experience in a licensed early learning and childcare facility working children birth to age five will also have the opportunity to have a prior learning assessment review to recognize their experiences and skills.

In both of these options, priority will be given to facilities who do not meet the current training criteria. In addition, educators who participate in either of these innovative professional learning programs will be required to take part in the Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development Program. Through this program, and in order to reduce the financial impact on the educator, they will continue to receive their wages and there will be no additional costs for the tuition. In addition, Operators will receive funding to help offset the cost associated with staff time and staff replacement to support the early childhood educators in completing their course work.

The objective to train current early childhood educators working in early learning and childcare facilities without affecting access to child care for parents and also to support retention of staff in the sector is key.

The quality of training is directly linked to the quality of service delivery to children. The time identified for both models by the colleges (microcredential - 6-8 months and Integrated - 80 weeks) to deliver quality college programs is necessary. We believe that this approaches will be much more effective in affecting the quality of pedagogical interventions since learners will also have the opportunity to practice the theories learned during their training.

Full funding will be rolled out to both colleges in fiscal year 2021-2022. However, training for educators will take longer to complete than the fiscal year barriers. Both community college systems will begin offering training cohorts as early as September 2021 with an anticipation that the cohorts will take possibly until March 2023 to complete. The province will collaborate closely with the colleges systems to coach educators to ensure that these trainings move forward smoothly.



## Actions

- Increase access to the “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” course for early childhood educators to help untrained educators meet the minimum training criteria.
- Increase access to innovative “Early Childhood Education” training for early childhood educators in collaboration with the New Brunswick Community College and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.

## Targets

Initiative	Baseline	Target by 2021-2022	Cumulative target by 2022-2023	Funding
Introduction to Early Childhood Education Course	0/800	400/800 are participating in the online course	800 educators - 600 anglophone seats - 200 francophone seats	Federal funding: \$255,000  *Included in the \$ 900,100 Administrative costs
Micro credentialing Experiential Learning	0/410	300 educators are participating in the innovative learning program	410 educators - 320 anglophone seats - 90 francophone seats  100% of seats completed by September 2022 (anglophone and francophone)	Federal funding: \$6,913,400  Micro credentialing - Experiential Learning: \$3,403,400  Integrated WorkStudy Program:
Integrated Work-Study Program	0/90	50 educators are participating in the workstudy program	90 educators - 50 anglophone seats - 40 francophone seats  100% of seats completed by March 2023 (anglophone and francophone)	\$3,510,000



# Professional Development and Growth

As noted by the early childhood educators, there is a keen sense of urgency to elevate and promote the profession. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work in collaboration with the educators and operators and the new professional association to build the umbrella for growth within a career pathway while empowering early childhood educators to become leaders of their profession. Educators participating in these programs will be supported in building their career goals and journey in growing their skills and developing a professional portfolio.

With that in mind, two new programs will be created:

## 1. Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development Program

Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development Program is intended to support early childhood educators in their career pathway. The program will support early childhood educators in building their professional portfolio to demonstrate how they acquire and improve their knowledge and competencies. Grounded in reflective practice, this will serve as a process for educators to record their reflections and to demonstrate their competencies by chronicling their professional learning activities. It will further help educators to achieve their goals for those pursuing career growth, while also improving how they set up the learning environments and learning plans for children in their care.

The concept of the professional portfolio will provide educator with the tools to demonstrate how they have acquired competencies that will then facilitate recognition either for the prior learning assessments review processes and/or for the recognition of training equivalency as indicated under the Early Childhood Services Ac.

## 2. Emergent Leaders Institute

This program is intended to be an in-depth professional development program designed to prepare educators to become leaders in their field. The Institute will provide two streams, one for pedagogical leadership and one for administrative leadership within the early childhood education sector.

The **Pedagogical Leadership Stream** is targeted to early childhood educators who want to build their competencies and deepen their understanding of the curriculum to become coaches and mentors for other early childhood educators.

The **Administrative Leadership Stream** is targeted to early childhood educators who have a desire to lead the administration and management component of a service. This stream will focus on administrative duties such as human resources management, financial management, facility management with an in-depth understanding of the legislations impacting early learning and childcare.

# Actions

- In collaboration with the early learning and childcare sector, establish and implement an Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development program that will support early childhood educators in building their credentials
- Develop an Emergent Leaders program as a leadership Institute to foster pedagogical and administration leadership.

Initiative	Baseline	Target	Funding
Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development Program	0/500	500 educators 370 Anglophone seats 130 francophone seats	Federal funding: \$305,000 – for all three components of the program
Pedagogical Leadership stream	0/70	70 educators 40 anglophone seats 30 francophone seats	
Administrative Leadership Stream	None	Development phase	



# Recruitment and Retention

It has become evident that efforts must be targeted in ensuring the early learning and childcare system can, not only recruit, but retain its educators as a key driver of quality. This is the lynch pin to ensuring quality early childhood education and the sustainability of future growth of the sector as it supports parents' workforce participation.

Staff turnover has increased significantly over the past year to nearly 40%. Different factors and the pandemic have affected this increase. Provincial investments in the past years in salary increases for trained educators as well as this federal initiative to support training should have a positive impact in reducing this rate.

In 2020, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development joined NouLab in scoping and framing potential solutions to address the issue early childhood educators' completion of their Early Childhood Education credentials, while working. The purpose of this lab is to use the collective knowledge, expertise and lived experiences of people to better understand the problem and come up with potential solutions. Through the New Brunswick Workforces strategy, New Brunswick will leverage the findings of this work as we, as a collective, foster ongoing professional learning for the early childhood education workforce.



In collaboration with the early learning and childcare sector and key partners the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will oversee the development and implementation of a promotional campaign of early childhood education profession to create public awareness and serve as a tool for recruiting qualified educators. It will also further explore other components such as certification and working conditions particularly with early childhood educators and operators of licenced early learning and childcare facilities.

A particular focus for 2021-2022 will be establishing a mechanism for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to conduct the credential review of early childhood educators, current and future, who have completed their early childhood education training outside of Canada.



# Actions

- Engage the early learning and childcare sector in further dialogue to identify additional pathways to ensure a robust workforce of qualified early childhood educators.
- Create a public awareness campaign to promote the early childhood education profession as a recruitment and retention strategy
- Explore the feasibility of implementing certification for the early childhood education profession, including training levels related to qualifications and competencies required.
- Establish a mechanism for recognition of qualification for early childhood educators who completed their training outside of Canada to facilitate recruitment of new Canadians.
- In collaboration with early learning and childcare Operators, explore the feasibility of implementing a database for substitute educators to facilitate access to qualified replacement staff by Operators.

Initiative	Baseline	Target	Funding
Engage the early learning and childcare sector	37,9% (1,392 ECE) turnover rate in 2020- 2021	Reduce the turnover rate by 2.9% (107 ECE) (from 37.9% to 35%)	Federal funding: \$125,000
Create a public awareness campaign			Federal funding: \$650,000
Certification			Federal funding: \$120,000
Recognition of qualifications			Federal funding: \$25,000
Substitute database			Federal funding: \$220,000

# Summary Tables

## Targets

Initiative	Program	2021-2022 Target	Budget
Innovative Professional Learning	Introduction to Early Childhood Education Course	800 educators 600 anglophone seats 200 francophone seats	\$255,000  (hire temporary staff to deliver training)  *Included in the \$900,100 Administrative costs
	Micro credentialing - Experiential Learning	410 educators 320 anglophone seats 90 francophone seats	\$6,913,400  (includes funds to offset educator time)
	Integrated Work-Study Program	90 educators 50 anglophone seats 40 francophone seats	
Professional Development and Leadership Institute	Early Childhood Educator Career Growth and Development Program	500 educators 370 Anglophone seats 130 francophone seats	\$305,000
	Pedagogical Leadership stream	70 educators 40 anglophone seats 30 francophone seats	
	Administrative Leadership Stream	Development phase	
Recruitment and Retention	Reduced turnover rate	Reduced turnover rate by 2.9% (107 ECE) from 37.9% average turnover rate to 35%	\$1,140,000

# Budget Summary

Initiatives	Budget
Innovative Professional Learning	\$6,913,400
Professional Development and Leadership Institute	\$305,000
Recruitment and retention	\$1,140,000
Administrative costs	\$900,100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,258 500</b>

