

Fifth Canadian Edition

ESSENTIALS

of Early Childhood Education

Jane Bertrand

Carol Gestwicki



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E D U C A T I O N

Essentials of Early Childhood Education, Fifth Canadian Edition

by Jane Bertrand and Carol Gestwicki

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The profession and practice of early childhood education is coming of age in Canada. Early childhood educators are gaining respect and recognition, and remuneration is increasing. The public is looking to early childhood educators to support young children's early learning and development in a variety of settings. The many decades of ambiguity about what to call ourselves—teachers, early childhood teachers, caregivers, early childhood workers, child care workers—are over. We are early childhood educators, and ours is a profession that is understood and valued by families and other professionals.

Early childhood educators are gaining unprecedented opportunities to work with young children in quality environments. With the expanded opportunities and recognition come new expectations and responsibilities. Our understanding of childhood, curriculum, and pedagogy is expected to encompass knowledge and expertise from biological sciences, education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. We must stay current and engaged with ongoing new information about early human development and early learning. A commitment to lifelong learning is essential for early childhood educators.

WHY WAS THIS BOOK WRITTEN?

This book was written from the authors' strong conviction that the care and education of children in their earliest years must go beyond rhetoric, to provide optimum experiences and environments for real children in our very real world. Those who enter the early childhood workforce find both enormous challenges and immense gratification as they nurture the healthy development of children and families. Child development research continues to reinforce the importance of the experiences, interactions, and environments that support children in the first years of their lives. The adults responsible for children's learning and care must be prepared to provide the best opportunities for children. As the need and demand for early childhood programs for children from birth through the elementary school years continues to expand in unprecedented dimensions, so too does the need for educated early childhood professionals.

This demand is related to a second strong conviction from which this book grows: that not just anyone can, or should, work with young children, and moreover, that young children do not need "just anyone." They need particular people, with specific characteristics, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, who have thoughtfully and deliberately prepared to enter into caring relationships with young children and their families. They need people who have committed themselves to following career paths in early childhood education, and who understand and accept the realities of the profession as it has evolved to this point. They need people who have decided to touch young lives and are willing to stay the course.

TWO MAIN THEMES

These are the two main themes of this book: (1) that early childhood educators do important, meaningful, valuable work, supporting children and families during the most critical period of development; and (2) that only individuals who are willing to accept the need for thoughtful and careful professional preparation will be able to help children reach their full potential. This book, then, proposes to examine the world of early childhood education and to assist the process of professional growth for those who are considering it as their future, a future that impacts generations to come.

Students will most likely use this text in a course that introduces them to concepts of early childhood education, near the beginning of their professional education, whether in a two- or a four-year program. Because the text is designed for students who will continue with other courses in an ECE college program, the specifics of theoretical perspectives, curriculum ideas and activities, and program management are left for those later courses.

Since the intention of the text is to help students begin active construction of themselves as early childhood educators, the style is both informative, so that students may truly understand the current field, and introspective, so that students may actively juxtapose their personal knowledge, goals, and experiences as they consider the professional roles and possibilities of working with young children. So, however you as a student came to study the essentials of early childhood education, you are invited to reflect on the profession.

COVERAGE

The Introduction to this book outlines the social and political context for early child development programs in Canada.

Section One, *Early Childhood Programs Today*, introduces you to the field in Canada.

- **Chapter 1, *Early Childhood Programs***, defines the parameters of the field and explores the diversity of program structures, age groups that early childhood educators work with, special population groups, and program sponsors.
- **Chapter 2, *Early Childhood Education Curriculum***, discusses different approaches to organizing early childhood environments for young children.
- **Chapter 3, *Quality in Early Childhood Education Programs***, describes the central elements of quality in early childhood settings.

Section Two, *The Early Childhood Workforce*, introduces the roles and responsibilities of early childhood educators.

- **Chapter 4, *Early Childhood Educators***, explores the various roles of early childhood educators who work with children and families in a wide spectrum of settings.
- **Chapter 5, *Becoming an Early Childhood Educator***, demonstrates that good early childhood educators are not born but grow actively, with much personal effort and thought. This chapter considers the skills, knowledge, and experiences that are important in developing yourself as an early childhood educator.

- **Chapter 6, *The Work Environment***, discusses the career opportunities now open to early childhood educators. It also examines some of the current challenges you will face as you enter the early childhood workforce.

Section Three, *The Early Childhood Workforce Comes of Age*, looks at how far we have come and what lies ahead. As we enter the 21st century, the combination of a seemingly unending need for early childhood educators, clear knowledge about what contributes to quality programs, and demands for professional standards and acceptance offers us positive directions for the future.

- **Chapter 7, *The Roots of Early Childhood Education in Canada***, describes the history of early childhood programs. In this chapter, you will see the multiple traditions and various philosophies and historic/social influences that have shaped the modern world of early childhood education. Many of the names and events you will read on the historical timeline will appear in this chapter to describe our historical roots.
- **Chapter 8, *The Modern Profession***, considers the current emphasis on professionalism, which will shape your introduction to joining the early childhood workforce.
- **Chapter 9, *Advocacy***, discusses the role of advocacy for early childhood educators, both within early childhood settings and in the world at large. The chapter summarizes the arguments for public investment in early childhood programs. It leaves you with the challenge to become an early childhood educator and advocate for young children and their families, early childhood programs, and the early childhood workforce.

CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

The fifth Canadian edition of *Essentials of Early Childhood Education* is now in full colour, with a new interior design and updated photos throughout the text.

Public education continues to reach down into the early years, expanding the numbers and types of opportunities open to early childhood education graduates. *Early Years Study 3* (Akbari & McCuaig, 2014) introduced the Early Childhood Education Report, which compares how provinces are developing early childhood education as an extension of public education. The benchmarks are organized into five categories—governance, access, funding, quality, and monitoring. The second Early Childhood Education Report was launched in November 2014. Throughout this text, findings from the Early Childhood Education Report are used to update statistics. Other recent research and policy reports make it possible to provide a more complete picture of the Canadian situation. This edition also updates Canadian and international findings related to early learning and development and early childhood education.

Early childhood educators are practising their profession in many different settings, including child care centres, family resource programs, prekindergartens, and kindergartens. Some of these settings require early childhood educators (e.g., regulated child care centres, full-day kindergarten in Ontario and Strong Start centres in British Columbia). Chapter 1 includes a summary of recent Canadian research that is tracking the impact of full-day kindergarten programs. Chapter 2 offers an expanded section on play and play-based

learning. Chapter 3 updates what we know from research about quality in early childhood settings. Section Two considers the opportunities now to early childhood education graduates and to the work environment evolving across Canada. Chapter 7 has an expanded discussion about the roots of early childhood education curriculum and pedagogy. Chapter 8 updates the growing professional requirements and obligations for early childhood educators in Canada. Chapter 9 uses the policy framework found in the Early Childhood Education Report and recent Canadian economic studies to make the case for more public investment in early childhood education programs.

FEATURES

Each chapter features objectives, review questions, study activities, and suggested readings. The key terms are bolded and defined at the end of each chapter.

To help spark discussion and thought, **timelines** outlining early childhood education facts appear throughout the book.

Watch for the **Research into Practice** feature, which highlights examples of evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence that guide early child development policies and practices. The **Making It Happen** boxes feature early childhood programs from across the country.

We welcome you to consider studies in early childhood education. We hope that you and your fellow students will discuss the topics and issues in depth and work through some of the additional readings and assignments at the end of each chapter.

We need and want you to stay. Early childhood educators, families, and communities can join together to nurture, stimulate, and educate young children. At no time in the history of Canada have children and families needed more the support, care, and expertise that early childhood education has to offer. Together we can prepare today's youngest Canadians for a rapidly changing and diverse world. The future might be uncertain and world tensions overwhelming, but we can be certain that a strong start is the best foundation for life.

ABOUT THE NELSON EDUCATION TEACHING ADVANTAGE (NETA)



The Nelson Education Teaching Advantage (NETA) program delivers research-based instructor resources that promote student engagement and higher-order thinking to enable the success of Canadian students and educators. Be sure to visit Nelson Education's Inspired Instruction website at www.nelson.com/inspired to find out more about NETA. Don't miss the testimonials of instructors who have used NETA supplements and seen student engagement increase!

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

All NETA and other instructor ancillaries can be downloaded directly from the book's companion site at www.nelson.com/essentialsofece5Ce.

NETA Test Bank

This resource was written by the author, Professor Jane Bertrand. It includes multiple-choice questions written according to NETA guidelines for effective construction and development of higher-order questions. Also included are short answer and essay questions.

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual to accompany *Essentials of Early Childhood Education* has been prepared by Professor Jane Bertrand. It is organized according to the textbook chapters and contains suggested classroom activities and additional resources.

Acknowledgements

Over the years we have heard the stories of many students, early childhood educators, and colleagues who have made their own discoveries of the essential truths and pleasures of working with young children. This book is dedicated to them, with thanks for their friendship along the way.

This Canadian edition is indebted to the generous permissions I received to reprint materials. Thanks to the Atkinson Centre, Canadian Child Care Federation, Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, the journal *IDEAS*, SpecialLink, and the Early Childhood Education program at Red River College.

Since I completed the first Canadian edition of this book, I have had the privilege of continuing to work with J. Fraser Mustard and the Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain to move the early years' agenda forward in Canada and internationally.

In addition, I appreciate the efforts and responses of the editorial and production staff at Nelson Education.

Jane Bertrand
George Brown College

Early childhood education is a field of study that prepares individuals to work with young children and their families. Commitment to early childhood education is a commitment to children. It is also a commitment to family, evidence, and Canada.

FAMILIES

Families come in all sizes and shapes. None are perfect; but in all their varied and wonderful configurations, they are here to stay. Families are the anchor for the human species. Families nurture the next generation. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins, and even family friends can make a big difference in the lives of our youngest citizens. Families and work life should be compatible. Work–life conflict should not require people to stand down from advancing their careers or deny them the opportunity to be parents. As you pursue your chosen career in early childhood education, you will have opportunities to support families.

Modern families need a modern support system of learning and caring, one that places the healthy development of children at the centre but also recognizes that children do not exist in isolation from their families. Early childhood education can be designed to accommodate people who are earning a living and at the same time raising a child. *Early Years Study 3* (McCain, Mustard, & McCuaig, 2011) introduced a new tool, the Early Childhood Education Report, to monitor the growth and development of early childhood education across Canada. In November 2014, the second edition of the Early Childhood Education Report (Akbari & McCuaig, 2014) demonstrated that Canada is making progress and that many provinces are well on their way towards an early childhood education system that can be an extended family for the 21st century. But we need to move faster. Greater public investment in early childhood education is needed to meet the needs of families, or young parents will face the same dilemmas earning a living and raising children as their parents and grandparents did.

EVIDENCE

A new picture of childhood and human nature is emerging from the research of the past two decades, and this new understanding can guide our thinking about education. Babies and young children are exquisitely designed to explore and innovate, to investigate and test hypotheses, to change and create, and to learn. Our most valuable human accomplishments are possible because we were once helpless children who actively engaged in the world around us. When we organize caregiving and education to value these capacities in the early years and beyond, learning soars.

Think about 20-month-old Ashraf. He attends a community early childhood program while his parents work. He is intently dropping a beach ball into a box placed in the middle of the playroom floor. At first, he stands directly over the box, carefully letting go of the ball and watching it land in the box. He reaches down and picks the ball up, stands up, and repeats the same action. The sequence happens over and over. After the 10th cycle, Ashraf pauses and stares at his feet. He deliberately steps backward two steps and tosses the ball towards the box. It falls outside the box. Ashraf scrambles to pick it up. He moves up to the box again and deliberately steps back one step and tosses the ball. It lands in the box. Ashraf squeals with delight and turns with a big smile directed to an educator who is sitting on the floor nearby. She claps her hands, says “Yea,” and smiles back. Ashraf repeats the action a few more times and then steps to the corner and a different angle. And the game continues for 20 minutes.

A simple moment is often dismissed as children’s play that does not have much to do with learning. But what Ashraf is doing is complicated: he is predicting, adapting, attending, planning, testing hypotheses, and learning from his actions. Ashraf is learning and learning how to learn.

Rigorous evidence holds our thoughts up to scrutiny and demands that we search out the best information. The past two decades have been remarkable: the science of early child development has exploded, and the findings are abundantly clear. The early years of life have a long reach forward. The dynamic interaction between our genetic inheritance and our early experiences defines the architecture of our brains and influences learning, behaviour, and health throughout our lives.

The brain of a newborn is exquisitely sensitive to early life, which is a time of enormous opportunity and risk. In nurturing environments, babies and young children are launched on trajectories to well-being. Adverse environments have an equally powerful negative effect.

If we want to put families at the centre of our society, if we want every child to be the best he or she can possibly be, if we want to reverse declining birthrates, we need to use the evidence to design early childhood education programs that promote optimal early learning and well-being in addition to accommodating labour force participation.

CANADA

We live in a truly magnificent country; we Canadians often forget how blessed we are. There have been intolerable injustices—none greater than the history of colonialism and the toll it extracted from Aboriginal peoples. The past decade has seen a worrisome increase in inequality between haves and have-nots. Given the wealth across Canada, our children’s well-being is not what it should be. Still, we are a democratic, pluralistic, and prosperous society. We believe that there is room at the table for everyone and we remain committed to public education and health care. Our public infrastructure works. Crime and violence are relatively low.

Our future in Canada depends on how we prepare the next generation. We cannot afford to leave a single child behind. The babies born today need

childhoods that prepare them for Canada 20 or 30 years from now. Schools must prepare students now for jobs that don't yet exist. You are entering careers that will be transformed several times during your working years. A few decades from now, the quality of your lives will depend on those babies born today. They will determine whether Canada remains a good place to live and to grow old. It is in our enlightened self-interest to ensure that today's babies get the experiences and support they need to take on the challenges ahead.

A strong and vibrant Canada is a Canada where every child has the chance to thrive. Family is what matters most and the science of early child development must inform how we design early childhood education to accommodate what families need. Early childhood educators can move the agenda forward and make Canada the best place it can be.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

In Canada, early childhood education programs continue to evolve from earlier child care arrangements, kindergarten, and family support programs.

Early childhood education includes a broad range of interconnected programs and services that support children's optimal development and families' childrearing skills. Educators who make up the early childhood workforce are equipped to work with young children in all of these settings.

Early childhood education continues to expand across Canada. There is growing awareness that early learning opportunities must be provided for young children living in an increasingly pluralistic society. Effective early childhood education that supports learning focuses on children's overall coping and competence. Increasingly, early childhood education is viewed as a downward extension of the public education system. Growing numbers of young children are taking part in early childhood education and the opportunities for early childhood educators will continue to expand.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS TODAY

In this section, you are introduced to the field of early childhood education in Canada. Chapter 1 defines early childhood programs in Canada, and Chapter 2 considers how early childhood settings are organized to provide learning and caring to young children. Chapter 3 explores the issue of quality from the perspective of children, parents, early childhood educators, and society, and it discusses specific components of quality in early childhood programs.

CHAPTER ONE

Early Childhood Programs

CHAPTER TWO

Early Childhood Education Curriculum

CHAPTER THREE

Quality in Early Childhood Education Programs



A PROFESSIONAL AND LIFE CHOICE

Loris Malaguzzi was the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education after World War II. The Reggio Emilia approach continues to be an inspiration for early childhood educators around the world. In the following excerpt, Malaguzzi explains how he came to early childhood education.

GANDINI ► It seems that you made a choice to dedicate your life to the education and care of young children. When did you make this life choice?

MALAGUZZI ► I could just avoid answering, as others have done before, by saying that when you don't ask me I know, but when you ask me, I do not know the answer anymore. There are some choices that you know are coming upon you only when they are just about to explode. But there are other choices that insinuate themselves into you and become apparent with a kind of obstinate lightness, that seem to have slowly grown within you during the happenings of your life because of a mixing of molecules and thoughts. It must have happened this latter way. But also World War II, or any war, in its tragic absurdity might have been the kind of experience that pushes a person toward the job of educating, as a way to start anew and

live and work for the future. This desire strikes a person, as the war finally ends and the symbols of life reappear with a violence equal to that of the time of destruction.

I do not know for sure. But I think that is where to look for a beginning. Right after the war I felt a pact, an alliance, with children, adults, veterans from prison camps, partisans of the Resistance, and the sufferers of a devastated world. Yet all that suffering was pushed away by a day in spring, when ideas and feelings turned toward the future, seemed so much stronger than those that called one to halt and focus upon the present. It seemed that difficulties did not exist, and that obstacles were no longer insurmountable.

It was a powerful experience emerging out of a thick web of emotions and from a complex matrix of knowledge and values, promising new creativity of which I was only becoming aware. Since those days I have often reassessed my position, and yet I have always remained in my niche. I have never regretted my choices or what I gave up for them.

Source: Edwards, Gandini, & Forman (Eds.). *The hundred languages of children*. Ablex Publishing Corp. Copyright © 1998 by Ablex Publishing Corp. Reprinted with permission of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

CHAPTER 1

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, students will be able to

- define early childhood programs
- identify different types of settings that provide early childhood programs
- describe how learning and caring are becoming more integrated in Canada
- discuss the availability of early childhood programs found in different regions across Canada

Every day almost two million Canadian children, from **infants** to **school-age children**, are cared for and educated by people other than their families, outside the regular school system. As they climb onto buses, streetcars, and trains, are strapped into car seats and strollers, or wave goodbye as their parents leave home, these children will be cared for and educated by adults who are designated as “teachers” or “caregivers.” Some children will go to **child care centres** or after-school programs, which might be located in school buildings, work sites, community centres, or churches. Other children will be cared for and educated in home settings, either the child’s own home or the caregiver’s home. Some children will spend only a few hours a week in early childhood settings, whereas others will be there for most of their waking hours.

Additional programs help parents and other family members to participate fully in their young children’s early learning and development. Young children and their mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, or older brothers and sisters may attend playgroups or drop-in centres together. Child care centres offer parents opportunities to learn about their children’s new interests and achievements, as well as to access community resources and information about child development.

More and more children will take part in early childhood programs aligned with the education system. In addition to kindergarten for five-year-olds and often junior kindergarten or prekindergarten for four-year-olds, many schools offer programming for younger children and their families.

All of these children and their families participate in situations that fall into our definition of **early childhood education programs**. **Early childhood educators**, individuals with specific qualifications in early childhood education, can choose to work in a variety of settings and with children in several different developmental phases. ECEs also work with parents and other family caregivers to better understand each family’s values and strengths and to offer support. In this chapter, we shall examine the many facets and faces of early childhood education programs.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

A Note on the Timeline

As you read this text, you will be able to follow a timeline that documents events, sociological trends, and contributions that people have made to early childhood education through the years. The timeline demonstrates that our current concerns and immediate issues play out against the backdrop of ideas and events from earlier times. Real events in history and past sociological trends have contributed to the shaping of the profession of early childhood education and care, and its practitioners. Changes in the profession take place in response to particular events and needs in society.

The timeline will show, for example, that there have been various types of early childhood education programs in Canada over the past two centuries. Early public expenditures on children included funds for schools to teach primary academic skills. Public schools then expanded to include kindergartens, which began as products of a particular philosophy of early childhood. With their inclusion in the public schools, kindergartens have undergone changes in both philosophy and format, and the debate about these changes is ongoing. The first child care centres sprang up at the end of the 19th century to provide care and protection for poor mothers seeking employment. The nursery schools that middle-class Canadian children began attending in the 1920s reflected both the societal value of early education and the cultural acceptance of the importance of childhood.

So, as you follow the timeline, you will see the names and accomplishments of some of the major contributors to the development of early childhood education philosophy and practice. You will note changes in family structure and the resulting needs of the family, as well as events that have focused national attention on children's early education. You will watch the profession of early childhood education and care as it comes of age.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEFINED

In *Early Years Study 3* (2011), McCain, Mustard, and McCuaig, defined **early childhood education**:

Early childhood education refers to programs for young children based on an explicit curriculum delivered by qualified staff and designed to support children's development and learning. Settings may include child care centres, nursery schools, preschools, pre- or junior kindergarten and kindergarten. Attendance is regular and children may participate on their own or with a parent or caregiver. (p. xi)

Early childhood education programs are programs specifically designed and organized for young children and their families. Their primary goal is to

provide an intentional educational program to young children. Early childhood education programs care for and educate young children, while supporting parenting, families, and communities. Early childhood programs include

- child care centres
- nursery schools and preschools
- early childhood intervention

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John Comenius, a Czech educator, writes *The School of Infancy*, referring to the "school of the mother's lap," in which a child from birth through age six would achieve the rudiments of all learning.

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- kindergarten and prekindergarten
- family literacy
- Aboriginal Head Start
- integrated child and family centres

Early childhood education programs are sometimes called **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** or **early learning and child care (ELCC)**.

Early Childhood Education

- Simon lives in Calgary. He is three years old and goes to a nursery school three mornings a week. His father works a night shift and his mother works at the shopping mall on Friday nights and all day Saturdays. One parent is at home with Simon all of the time except for Friday nights when he stays with his Grandma.
- Carla is twelve months old and goes to a child care centre at the university in Vancouver where her dad works. She is often there by 8:00 a.m. and goes home with her dad around 5:00 p.m.
- Elisheva is a four-year-old who is severely brain-damaged. She can sit only with support, cannot speak, and needs to be fed. For a year, she has been in a municipally operated child care centre in a small Ontario town where a specially trained resource teacher provides the extra help that allows her to be part of her group. Her mother and father are in the labour force.
- Ian's parents are both professionals working full time. Almost every day, Ian goes to a community-based child care centre run by a parent board in Winnipeg. His special group of friends includes Tyson, whose mom is struggling to move from welfare to work; Katie, whose parents are both factory workers; and Liam, a psychiatrist's son.
- Jessica, who is two and a half, goes with her mother and younger brother to a Strong Start program located in the neighbourhood public school two or three mornings a week in Victoria. Sometimes Jessica's mother stays and sometimes she will leave for a couple of hours and then come back for Jessica and her brother.
- Etan is four years old and lives in a small town in New Brunswick. He and his grandmother attend an integrated child and family centre located at the local school three mornings a week. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Etan attends the program all day from 8:00 a.m., when his dad drops him off on the way to work. Next year Etan will attend everyday from 8:00 a.m. until around 4:00 p.m. The centre is an extension of the school.

Ayesha, Carmen, Simon, Carla, Elisheva, Ian, and Etan are all in early childhood education programs. Although the funding, management, and administration of the programs differ, their daily activities are similar. If the settings are of high quality, the children are exploring rich social and physical environments that support their healthy development.

In each of the early childhood programs, the physical environment is set up for children. Carla's infant room has a large, open play area with lots of soft cushions and pillows. The wall is lined with a cruising rail for beginning walkers, and there are low shelves with several bright toys for shaking, poking, pushing, and pulling. Jessica's favourite time at Strong Start is circle time when one of the staff or a parent reads stories from picture books, and all the children and parents join in songs and child-centred activities. Ayesha's kindergarten, Simon's nursery school, Ian's and Elisheva's child care, and Carla's infant room all have a circle or group time. Simon often plays in the dramatic play centre at his nursery school; there are dress-up clothes and lots of dishes and pots and pans. Simon likes to pretend he is a busy chef at a big restaurant.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Ayesha's kindergarten looks a lot like Simon's nursery school. Her favourite place is the art easel with its fresh pots of paint each day. Etan plays with the same group of children in the same setting whether he comes with his grandma for mornings or attends full days on his own.

In each of these settings, adults educate and care for each child as they build relationships that are both responsive to and respectful of children's growing competence and abilities to cope. They make sure their needs for food, physical safety, sleep, and toileting are met. These adults know that children are not isolated individuals but are part of families, and that support to those families is critically important. They are intentional in choosing strategies that best support children's learning. There are also other children to play with in each of these settings as well as adults who play a role in setting the stage and encouraging the play among the children.

Children do not come to an early childhood education setting merely to do their "learning." Rather, they "live" in these settings for several hours every week. Just as they are learning at home when they discover how the flusher on the toilet works, or how to use simple tools to fix things, or how soothing it is to hear dad's voice sing them to sleep, every hour in an early childhood setting is filled with new information and experiences.

Sources: Beach & Bertrand, 2000; Bertrand, 2008; Pascal, 2009a.

The children described in the box "Early Childhood Education Programs" are guided by early childhood educators (ECEs)—adults who have studied early childhood education or have a combination of equivalent education and experience. In quality settings, children are offered rich social and physical environments that support their healthy development.

Early childhood programs support children's early development, learning, care, and families' capacity to participate fully in their children's early development. Early childhood programs include all forms of non-parental care and early education programs (with the exception of the formal education system that starts at Grade 1 in Canada) for children from infancy through middle childhood. High-quality early childhood programs ensure that the programs are geared toward young children, families, and communities, and involve the participation of ECEs. Quality programs must be responsive to each child's individual development, each family's values and childrearing practices, and each community's cultural context.

The definition gives us a sense of the variety of settings that early childhood education programs encompass. It conveys the concept that early childhood education programs include various structures that meet individual needs for different families. Learning and caring are central in this definition. Early childhood education programs encourage families' active participation in their children's early development and promote communities' capacity to support families.

Across Canada, regulated family child care and informal care arrangements in a caregiver's own home are not required to offer early childhood education. Their primary purpose is to provide care for children. On the other hand, family resource programs, parenting programs, home visiting, and

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John Locke, in England, writes *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and proposes the mind of a child as *tabula rasa* (a "blank slate").

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prenatal and postnatal programs are closely related and sometimes interconnected with early childhood education. They are directed toward parents and other caregivers and share the common goal of supporting young children's health and well-being. Recreation and leisure programs and public libraries are environments that complement early childhood programs and support family life.

Early childhood education programs provide educational activities to encourage children's competence and provide care to support children's development of coping skills and their overall well-being. Good programs for children present opportunities for learning; assistance with personal routines in safe, healthy, and nurturing environments; and, most importantly, positive relationships with adults and other children. Therefore, the joint functions of learning and caring are essential to early childhood education. Early childhood education programs recognize that families have the most powerful influence on early learning and development. We can support families only when we begin with full respect for individual childrearing values and practices and the strengths of each family.

In this chapter, we will explore different types of early childhood education and related programs. In later chapters, we will uncover their historical roots in education, social welfare, recreation, and health concerns that defined a need for young children to receive care and education outside their families.



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▲ Children have opportunities to play together at early childhood programs.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are almost five million children from newborn to twelve years of age in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014). Nearly 1.5 million children under twelve years of age are enrolled in some form of early childhood education or school-age child care program outside of Grade 1 to 6 elementary school programs (Beach et al., 2009; McCain, Mustard, & McCuaig, 2011; Ferns & Friendly, 2014; McCuaig & Akbari, 2014). About one million are in regulated child care programs. Over 500 000 children attend school kindergarten and prekindergarten programs. There are also more than 50 000 children who participate in early intervention and other early childhood education programs that are operated apart from regulated child care or kindergarten programs (McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007).

The need for non-parental care arrangements while parents are working or attending school often determines the type of early childhood education programs families choose. Child care centres are designed to accommodate the needs of working parents and promote children's early development and learning. More than 3 million children from 0 to 12 years have working parents. As mentioned above, about one million children from 0 to 12 years are in regulated child care programs. Another 1.5 million children are in non-parental care arrangements outside of organized early childhood programs. In two-parent families, parents may be able to work their schedules so that one parent

is at home with young children. Many are cared for by other family members. Sometimes school-age children are left on their own or with an older sibling before and after school and on school holidays.

Many children take part in an early childhood education program while they are cared for in private arrangements. For instance, many take part in kindergarten or preschool programs for half a day and are cared for by a private caregiver or other family member for the remaining hours while parents are at work. An informal caregiver may attend a family resource centre with the children in her care. Also, approximately 300 000 children who have a parent at home full time take part in early childhood education and care programs and about one-third of all children are in more than one ECEC program and/or private non-parental care arrangement (Johnson, Lero, & Rooney, 2001).

Because there are so many different types of early childhood education programs and no organized system for early childhood, it is difficult to determine exactly how many children and families are participating in what programs. Table 1.1 offers a broad overview of how many children participate in various early childhood education programs.

As early childhood educators entering the field, you can gain a better understanding of potential career opportunities by becoming familiar with early childhood education and care programs available across Canada. Table 1.2 gives an overview of five different categories of early childhood education programs. Some programs might be included in more than one category, or they might

TABLE 1.1 Early Childhood Education Programs for Newborns to Twelve-Year-Olds in Canada

| Early Childhood Education Program | Children 0–12 Attending |
|---|-------------------------|
| Centre-based program* | 860 000 |
| Kindergarten/prekindergarten (public education) | 500 000 |
| Regulated family child care | 140 000 |
| Aboriginal Head Start | 12 000 |
| Early intervention programs | 50 000 |
| TOTAL | 1 562 000 |

* Includes regular full-time or part-time participation in nursery schools, child care centres, preschool centres, and after-school programs.

Sources: Adapted from Cleveland, Forer, Hyatt, Japel, & Krashinsky, 2008; Eggleton & Keon, 2009; Fern & Friendly, 2014; McCuaig & Akbari, 2014; McCain, Mustard, & McCuaig, 2011.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau publishes *Emile*, a story that illustrates his view that children are born naturally good and that development unfolds accordingly if adults do not interfere.

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◀ Parents who work often require full-day, full-year non-parental care for their children.

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TABLE 1.2 Early Childhood Education Programs

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Child Care Centres | Full-day or part-day programs for groups of children under school age or for school-age children during out-of-school hours. Organized to provide programs that are stimulating and nurturing for children and that accommodate parents' work schedules. |
| Preschool/Nursery School | Part-day, often part-week, programs for children between the ages of approximately 2 1/2 and 5 years. Usually less than four hours per day. |
| Early Childhood Intervention | Organized programs and activities available to young children and families who have developmental challenges or who are at risk of developmental delays. |
| Kindergarten/ Prekindergarten | Early education program available to all five-year-old children through the education system. In some parts of Canada, prekindergarten programs delivered through the education system are available to three- and four-year-old children. |

overlap with related programs. We need to understand the terms and concepts used to describe each type of program and each program's potential to meet the needs of young children and their families.

Child Care Centres

Child care centres include group or centre-based programs outside regular schooling for children from as young as three months to those up to twelve years of age. Most offer **full-day programs** five days a week and programs before and after school and during school holidays for school-age children. The majority of child care centres in Canada offer service for preschool children two to five years of age. Nursery schools and preschools are **part-day programs**; they may be part of a child care centre or operate as an individual program.

Child care centres are organized to serve the needs of parents working outside the home or pursuing further education or training and who therefore need supplemental care for their children for eight or more hours a day. Many full-day programs operate from early morning (for example, from 7:00 or 7:30 a.m.) until 6:00 p.m. or later, to allow parents time to drop off their children, put in a full work or study day, and return to pick up the children. Child care centre staff usually work at staggered times, to provide adequate coverage over the full period.

Some child care centres that serve particular corporations, health care institutions, or businesses offer several shifts of child care to accommodate the needs of parents who work during the evening or night. However, most programs offer regular daytime care only. Child care centres may accept children on a part-time basis, but seasonal or emergency care or services for parents who work shifts and irregular hours are scarce across the country.

Child care centres are regulated by provincial and territorial governments' child care legislation. Each province has established its own approach to organizing and licensing child care and preschool or nursery school programs, and it is difficult to make direct comparisons across jurisdictions. However, Table 1.3 provides an overview of what types of services are regulated, how many children attend, and what the different services are called. Regulated child care programs are the anchor of Canada's early childhood education, although less than 20 percent of all Canadian children are enrolled in these programs.

Specific requirements may concern staff qualifications, maximum number of children, **adult-child ratios** (the maximum number of children allowed for every staff member), physical space regulations, including the minimum amount of space necessary for each child, daily care routines, and program activities. We will examine these requirements in more detail in Chapter 3.

In Canada, regulated child care programs may be operated by non-profit organizations or commercial or by independent operators, or they may be publicly operated by governments such as local municipalities or school boards.

Most child care centres in Canada are **non-profit** and are operated for the primary purpose of supporting child and family needs and well-being. A non-profit centre might be a stand-alone organization with a volunteer board of directors, including parents, community members, and individuals with child care expertise; or it might be operated by a larger agency or institution. The YMCA in Canada, for instance, operates over 600 centres. Many community colleges and a few universities directly operate child care centres, which also provide model sites for ECE students.

Commercial child care centres, also called proprietary or for-profit centres, are privately owned businesses. About 25 percent of Canada's child care centres operate as commercial businesses, ranging from small, owner-operated programs to large chains. In Newfoundland, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, and

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The first Maternal Association is established by a group of ministers' wives in Portland, Maine, to encourage the moral and religious training of children.

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