



Join the AECEO in chronicling its history.

If you know of a provincial AECEO milestone that has been missed in this summary, please send details by email to info@aeceo.ca using the subject title “AECEO Milestones”, or by traditional mail to the provincial office. Our website history chart will be updated as we receive contributions.

AECEO History – A Review of Our Milestones

Throughout its history, the AECEO has organized and administered important developments in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the areas of training, public awareness, certification, equivalency, networking, professional development and recognition for the profession. As part of the AECEO’s 60th Anniversary celebration we wish to recognize a rich history of accomplishments, made possible by many, dedicated individuals.

1950 - The Nursery Education Association of Ontario (NEAO) was established. It responded to the absence of government regulation and formal facilities for training in early childhood studies for day nursery staff. Among its first founding members was staff from University of Toronto Institute of Child Studies Laboratory School, a leading edge nursery school program influenced by the teachings of U of T Professor, William Blatz, a world renowned pioneer in early childhood research and practice. NEAO was also a founding member of the World Organization for Preschool Education (OMEP), the working committee of UNESCO in preschool education.

1950-65 – NEAO initiated the first university extension course and the first diploma course at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute for preschool teachers. Under NEAO sponsorship, the program expanded to six Ontario universities that began offering evening and summer training programs for those already working in the field.

1964 - NEAO established a voluntary Certification Process for preschool teachers. This process recognized and encouraged achievement both in training and preschool teaching. Certificates were awarded to applicants who achieved the required level of training, and whose work in the preschool field was evaluated over a required period of time by certified colleagues. Applicants with out-of-province and out-of-country credentials were required to undergo a “Pre-Certification” process to obtain an AECEO letter of equivalency prior to applying for certification.

1969 - NEAO assisted in moving the preschool training from University extension courses to newly established Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology to make it more accessible. ECE diploma programs were offered in many community colleges across the province.

NEAO officially changed its name to the Association of Early Childhood Education Ontario (AECEO) to better reflect the scope of its work.



1970s – AECEO continued to evaluate advanced courses in Early Childhood Education, publishing an approved listing of courses in its newsletters. AECEO strongly believed in ongoing learning and strongly advocated for community colleges to offer post diploma courses specializing in areas such as special needs, music, art and management.

1980 – AECEO launched “Week of the Child”, an annual public education campaign to raise awareness of the value of Early Childhood Education and educators.

1982 – AECEO launched the Margaret Fletcher Award Program in honour of this long-standing member and her work in early childhood education. The award, given annually, recognized innovative early childhood education programs in Ontario.

1983 – AECEO published a Child Abuse Handbook for ECEs with a grant from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It has since been revised with the title “A Child in Need of Protection: A handbook for Early Childhood Educators”. It continues to be a basic reference book used in ECE training programs across Ontario.

1984 – The Pre-Certification Process was changed to Equivalency Process through the formation of an Equivalency Committee. This committee’s work focused on the evaluation and creation of a process that will assess credentials of non-OCAAT (Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology), out-of-province and out-of-country trained individuals.

1989 – AECEO established a Legislative Recognition committee to advocate for the creation of a professional regulatory body for ECEs in Ontario. AECEO spearheaded a feasibility and needs study, surveying professionals and child care organizations across the province.

1990 – AECEO Equivalency Process evolved to include services in both official languages, French and English. AECEO published a list of Canadian post secondary programs whose graduates were eligible to receive AECEO “Recognition of Equivalency Certificates”. The Ministry of Community and Social Services recognized the AECEO’s role in credential evaluation and provided a subsidy grant to the Association to reduce fees for applicants applying for Equivalency. Ministry program advisors began to use AECEO Automatic Equivalent listing of Canadian ECE programs to evaluate staff qualifications for licencing purposes.

1994 – AECEO revised its [Code of Ethics](#), a set of values and principles by which ECEs are asked to adhere to in their practice. A grant was received from MCSS to print and distribute copies of the Code of Ethics to all licenced programs across Ontario. It continues to be used as the ethical standard in ECE training institutions and child care programs.

1995 – French services for the AECEO’s Equivalency Process were transferred to l’AFESAO (L’Association francophone à l’éducation des services à l’enfance de l’Ontario) to deliver in the province of Ontario.



1996 – Private members bill to establish a College of Early Childhood Educators was first presented at legislature. Though this attempt was unsuccessful, AECEO continued to lobby for a College. The AECEO Certification Process gained momentum as professionals registered to demonstrate their commitment to standards of practice and be part of a professional registry. AECEO changed its name to “Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario” to reflect its new role as the professional association and voluntary regulatory body for Early Childhood Educators in Ontario.

2000 – AECEO celebrated its 50th Anniversary at their annual conference in Niagara attracting, as it has in the past five decades, hundreds of provincial, national and international delegates.

2002 – Legislative Recognition committee regrouped and reasserted through educational presentations and campaigns the need for a College of ECE.

2004 - AECEO Program Accreditation was launched in response to the need to update the AECEO automatic equivalent listing and the growing number of non-OCAAT ECE programs requesting recognition. "AECEO ECE Accredited Programs” met AECEO Standards of Equivalency. Graduates are recognized by the AECEO as having gained valid credentials similar vocationally to an OCAAT ECE diploma, enabling them to work as ECEs in licenced settings in Ontario. In 2006, Mothercraft Toronto ECE diploma program received the first AECEO Accredited Program status.

2005 – The Common Table for Childhood Development and Care is formed by the AECEO, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC), Ontario Association of Family Resource Programs (OAFRP), Home Child Care Association of Ontario (HCCAO), Ontario Early Years Centre Network (OEYCN) and Middle Years Matter Coalition (MYMC). Established to promote collaboration in advocacy and delivery of services to children and families in Ontario, the six founding partners establish and form the Steering Committee, and promote a collaborative membership model. The Common Table has since grown to include 22 provincial members.

2006 - AECEO launched Access to the ECE field in Ontario, a project funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to provide internationally trained ECEs and kindergarten/elementary teachers a pathway to certification. This three-year pilot project, first offered in Toronto, expands to include Ottawa and Peel region. The project exceeded its target (of 30) in the first year by engaging 180 participants. A new course, “ECE in Canadian Context”, was developed and launched as part of this program. The project and its practices, become integrated into the AECEO Equivalency Process. AECEO collaborated with Common Table Steering Committee Members on the coordination of a provincial forum on services to children and families. AECEO co-hosted its annual provincial conference with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, a first for both organizations.



2007 – AECEO was invited by Minister Mary Anne Chambers to speak at a press conference during her announcement of the successful passing of legislation to establish the College of Early Childhood Educators. AECEO signed a service agreement with MCYS to provide Equivalency services for Early Childhood Educators in the province of Ontario.

2008 – LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) and AECEO developed a one-day employment training seminar for LINC child minders using the ECE in the Canadian context course. LINC programs support newcomer families. AECEO received a Sector Initiative Funding grant to develop a training module on the Day Nurseries Act for ECEs working in the field. The Fairness Commissioners Office audited AECEO’s Equivalency Process and declared it an example of best practices standards. AECEO in collaboration with community colleges and organizations coordinated province wide Institutes on “Empowering” the profession with a special focus on the new College of ECE.

2009 – AECEO received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to launch a Leadership and Capacity Building project to engage AECEO members and stakeholders in a consultative process during Spring 2009, and reported on project outcomes in the Fall 2009 eceLINK. (The OTF is an agency of the Government of Canada). College of ECE is granted permission to use the AECEO Code of Ethics in the development of their own document. AECEO continued their province-wide Institutes focusing specifically on the implementation of the Early Learning Advisor’s report on early learning programs for four –and-five-year-olds. Over 30 organizations and colleges collaborated on the coordination of the Institutes, with 1600 delegates attended these events.