



# The History of the AECEO: A Timeline of Milestones

Throughout its history, the AECEO has organized and administered important developments in Early Childhood Education and Care in the areas of training, public awareness, certification, equivalency, networking, professional development, community building and recognition for the profession. This document outlines our history as an organization, documenting important policy wins, moments of community, solidarity, and much more.

We are grateful to every individual who has contributed to this legacy of connection and to those who follow this path forward. We are standing on the shoulders of giants, learning from them and moving forward toward a more just world for children, families, and early years professionals. Thank you to those who have contributed to the creation and maintenance of this document:

Leah Yuyitung (2006)  
Julia Lipman (2008)  
Sue Parker (2012)  
Erin Filby (2019)  
Alana Powell (2020)  
Amber Straker (2025)  
Rachel Neville (2025-2026)

Thank you to all the AECEO staff, placement students, and volunteers who have contributed to this work over many decades.

## 1950

The Nursery Education Association of Ontario (NEAO) - which would later be renamed and become the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) - 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 Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly 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

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

## 1980

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

## 1982

The 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 for many years, recognized innovative early childhood education programs in Ontario.

## 1983

The 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*. In February 2021, the AECEO discontinued publishing the handbook due to concerns about its content and issued a Statement on Child Protection.

## 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 would assess credentials of non-OCAAT (Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology) individuals, out-of-province, and out-of-country trained individuals.

## 1989

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

## 1990

The AECEO Equivalency Process evolved to include services in both official languages, French and English. The 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 AECEO 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 licensing purposes.

## 1994

The AECEO revised its Code of Ethics, a set of values and principles by which ECEs were asked to adhere to in their practice. A grant was received from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to print and distribute copies of the Code of Ethics to all licensed programs across Ontario. This document 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

A private members bill to establish a College of Early Childhood Educators was first presented at the legislature. Though this attempt was unsuccessful, the 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. The 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

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

## 2002

The Legislative Recognition committee regrouped and reasserted through educational presentations and campaigns the need for a College of Early Childhood Educators.

## 2004

The 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 were recognized by the AECEO as having gained valid credentials similar vocationally to an OCAAT ECE diploma, enabling them to work as ECEs in licensed settings in Ontario. In 2006, Mothercraft Toronto ECE diploma program received the first AECEO Accredited Program status. The AECEO published a position statement on universality, supporting the principle that expansion of early learning and child care services in Ontario should be confined to the non-profit sector.

## 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 established and formed the Steering Committee, and promoted a collaborative membership model. The Common Table has since grown to include 22 provincial members.

## 2006

The 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, expanded 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.

The AECEO collaborated with Common Table Steering Committee Members on the coordination of a provincial forum on services to children and families.

The AECEO co-hosted its annual provincial conference with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, a first for both organizations.

## 2007

The AECEO was invited by Minister Mary Ann Chambers to speak at a press conference during her announcement of the successful passing of legislation to establish the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The 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 the 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.

The 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 the AECEO's Equivalency Process and declared it an example of best practices standards.

The 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 Early Childhood Educators.

## 2009

The 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 was an agency of the Government of Ontario.

The College of ECE is granted permission to use the AECEO Code of Ethics in the development of their own document.

The 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 attending these events.

## 2010

The AECEO proudly celebrated its milestone 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on November 6, 2010.

The AECEO initiated a strategic renewal process to evaluate its vision, values, mission and goals to ensure the organization continues to play an important role for early childhood educators and the early learning sector.

The AECEO's equivalency and credential assessment process came to an end after almost half a century. This responsibility was transferred to the College of Early Childhood Educators on December 31, 2010. The AECEO Letters of Equivalency certificates issued on or before February 23, 2014 will continue to be recognized by the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The AECEO received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to continue its Leadership and Capacity Building project.

A new mission statement was unanimously passed at the 2010 conference in Hamilton Ontario.

## 2012

In January, a comprehensive review of the AECEO certification process began in response to the many changes happening in the ECE sector.

The Branch Rejuvenation plan was launched.

## 2013

*Professional Pay for Professional Work* campaign to improve compensation for RECEs launched at the AECEO Provincial Conference in Toronto.

All active branches of the AECEO transitioned to the rejuvenated model.

The AECEO took the lead in addressing principles for continuous professional learning by publishing a discussion paper for member and sector-wide feedback.

George Brown College became the first College in Ontario to partner with the AECEO to ensure student awareness and readiness for practice by facilitating 2nd year ECE students' membership in the AECEO.

The AECEO and Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) launched a three year initiative to promote the value of licensed child care and the importance of Registered Early Childhood Educators to the delivery of a high quality program funded through the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

## 2014

The AECEO online learning initiative launched, including a 40 hour module on professionalism, a 20 hour module on E-Portfolios and a three-part webinar series entitled *Foundations for RECE Practice in Full Day Kindergarten*.

The AECEO Certification Process review was completed and a new, updated process opened for intake.

Working with sector leaders and stakeholders the AECEO took the lead in sponsoring the development and circulation of an Open Letter addressed to the Minister of Education concerning the proposed regulatory changes (Regulation 262) to the Day Nurseries Act.

First AECEO online/electronic AGM and electronic/mail-in election was held.

An award was presented to the AECEO by George Brown College, School of Early Childhood, and the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for its contribution to the profession.

A new website was launched, which was more user-friendly and comprehensive, and introduced increased resources.

## 2015

After many years of lobbying by the AECEO and other ECE sector stakeholders, the Ontario Government provides a two dollar per hour wage increase over two years, for child care centre staff and licensed home child care providers.

The AECEO co-hosts six *Child Care Matters to Everyone* regional conferences across Ontario.

The AECEO launched a petition calling on the provincial government to fund professional pay for all ECEs in Ontario regardless of where they work.

The AECEO discussion paper *Regional Wage Scales for RECEs Working in Regulated Childcare in Ontario* released.

The AECEO project proposal *Mobilizing the early childhood workforce in the movement for decent work* was approved by the Atkinson Foundation.

## 2016

Following significant pushback from the ECE community, the Ontario Government backed off on proposed changes to Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) ratios, group sizes, and age groupings through concerted ECE community efforts led by the AECEO and multiple ECE sector partners.

The AECEO and project partners host mobilization forums in Sault Ste. Marie, Brantford, Scarborough, Mississauga, Whitby, Waterloo, Kingston and Sudbury to support the early childhood community in articulating their needs and understanding of decent work.

The AECEO releases “*I’m more than ‘just’ an ECE*”: *Decent work from the perspective of Ontario’s early childhood workforce*”. This was a report on the collective insights about decent work from the mobilization efforts held in 8 communities.

*Shaping Our Future: Innovation, Leadership and Advocacy* provincial conference was held in conjunction with the OCBCC - commemorating the 10 year anniversary of the organizations’ first joint conference.

## 2017

Over 4,000 RECEs and early years staff responded to the AECEO's consultation survey that helped inform recommendations made by the AECEO's “Decent Work Task Force” to the Ministry of Education. The policy recommendations, *Transforming Work in Ontario’s Early Years and Child Care Sector*, called for a provincial wage scale with a starting/minimum wage of \$25 per hour.

In partnership with the Institute for Change Leaders and Olivia Chow, AECEO, OCBCC and Atkinson Centre offered Building Skills for Change leadership training in Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo Region and Thunder Bay. These events led to the formation of 5 local Communities of Practice (CoPs) that work with the AECEO as decent work teams to organize and build capacity in their local communities.

The AECEO made an active commitment to participate in and support the process of reconciliation with First Nation, Métis and Inuit People and communities in Ontario and across Canada. A Guiding Committee on Truth and Reconciliation was established to share knowledge, traditions and teachings, and help to inform the AECEO’s efforts.

The AECEO and the *eceLINK* editorial committee developed a revamped and improved *eceLINK* that included peer reviewed articles.

## 2018

The Professional Pay petition reached & surpassed the goal of 10,000 signatures.

The Ontario Government released *Growing Together: Ontario's Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy* that included a plan to implement a wage grid that reflects qualifications and experience for all program staff.

Four hundred RECEs participated in the AECEO's Humans of ECE campaign, inspired by the Humans of Basic Income campaign and the iconic Humans of New York social media movement, to highlight the value of ECE professionals while also raising awareness of professional pay and decent work.

## 2019

A successful joint campaign between the AECEO & OCBCC called on the new Ontario Government to continue the Wage Enhancement Grant, enacted by the previous government in 2015. This hard copy petition garnered 17,000 signatures and was presented in the Ontario Legislature 16 times.

The AECEO partners with the University of Western Ontario in leading the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care and Secretariat to connect practitioners, education institutions, and employers through innovative networks across Ontario.

The AECEO partners with the OCBCC on an Early Learning and Child Care Innovation project: A national network on early learning and child care human resources innovation and decent work.

## 2020

The AECEO responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing frequently-updated resources for ECEs receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and other financial support. We engaged the community with a Pandemic Pay Letter and campaign advocating that the Ontario government extend the \$4 per hour pandemic pay increase to apply to all

staff in emergency child care. The survey *Returning to Work: ECE and early years staff perspectives* was launched, garnering 4000 participants and prompting the writing of the report *From Reopening to Recovery* released in August.

The “Decent Work Communities of Practice” (CoPs) hosted virtual coffee & conversation meetings to bring educators together during a time of uncertainty and fear.

The AECEO hosted online training with the Institute for Change Leaders. Many other webinars also took place including:

- Operators Webinar
- Ontario Child Care Webinar: Highlighting voices from emergency child care and next steps for advocacy
- Reopening to Recovery Report Webinar and Parent Webinar
- Meet Your MPP; Advocacy skills with Olivia Chow
- From Reopening to Recovery: Where are we now?
- Decent Work and Pedagogy
- Inaugural Kindergarten Conversation and subsequent Kindergarten Conversations
- Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Early Childhood Education, led by the AECEO's Community of Black ECEs

The Federal Speech from the Throne mentioned Early Childhood Educators and a universal child care system. The #RisingUpForChildCare campaign launched, focusing on frontline ECEs and staff, parents and families experiencing the child care crisis.

The 5 year review of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) opened, and the AECEO encouraged ECE submissions and sought member input for an AECEO submission, shared on July 24th. In October, proposed regulatory amendments to the CCEYA were released and the AECEO and OCBCC launched a survey on these changes. In November *An insult to educators, children and families: Child care community views on the Ontario government's proposed changes to the Child Care and Early Years Act* report was released by the AECEO and OCBCC. The AECEO hosted a week of action to stop the child care changes, and provided a submission on the proposed regulatory amendments to the CCEYA. Our campaign entitled, *Stop the Child Care Changes* launched with a video series outlining the demands. Ultimately, the proposed changes to the CCEYA that impacted the work of early years professionals on the floor were not moved forward.

## 2021

The AECEO continued to support ECEs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and launched a survey called, *Covid Experiences*. The findings of this survey were released in a report

called, *Forgotten on the Frontlines*. An open letter was launched as part of the *Protect and Respect* campaign, and the AECEO joined the “Decent Work Health Network” in a phone zap to advocate for paid sick days. Another survey was released to learn more about ECEs access to COVID-19 vaccines. In tandem, a week of action campaign was launched to advocate for vaccine priority for ECEs and child care workers. Soon after, ECEs won vaccine priority in Ontario.

The AECEO hosted a Kindergarten Roundtable and Kindergarten Conversations, bringing together and providing space for ECEs working in Ontario’s Kindergarten program, resulting in the development and publication of specific resources for this group of ECEs. Other webinars and events included:

- What is Play?: Shifting Learning Experiences in the Virtual Kindergarten Learning Environment
- Community Wellness Check-In event
- Participation in the International Women’s Day rally and march
- Emergency Roundtable: Ontario’s Child Care Crisis

The Ontario government received the AECEOs submission to their pre-budget consultation.

The Federal Government invested \$30B into the creation of a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. The AECEO joined a Federal Budget Watch party to celebrate this historic milestone. The AECEO and OCBCC published, *The Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario* (first edition) detailing policy recommendations for the successful implementation of CWELCC in Ontario. The AECEO and OCBCC organized Take Action Tuesdays Summer, a campaign inviting educators to engage with *The Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario* through activities that are typically found in child care programs.

The AECEO is approved and begins the Building Leadership and Learning Communities Project. The goal of this project was to connect, support, and empower Early Childhood Educators and child care workers. Through this project, two new Communities of Practice (CoPs) were established: Newcomer Services and Peterborough/Kawartha. Six Professional Learning Experiences and Conversations were hosted.

Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Day took place in October, with the launch of, *Who is your child care hero?* In partnership with the OCBCC, this project asked people to nominate ECEs and child care workers for their excellent work in the sector.

With a grant from the Metcalf Foundation, the AECEO partnered with Institute for Change Leaders (ICL) to provide a leadership training series entitled, *Empowering ECEs Workers in the GTA*.

## 2022-2023

The AECEO and OCBCC hosted a Day of Action for Child Care which included a rally and phone zap. The goal of these actions were to address COVID-19 related concerns and to pressure the Ontario government to sign a CWELCC agreement with the federal government.

The Ontario government signed the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement, indicating their commitment to work with the Federal government to begin system building. Later, the AECEO shared a survey with ECEs to ask for their feedback to inform the CWELCC Implementation Consultation with the Ministry of Education.

The provincial government implemented a “wage floor” of \$18 per hour for ECEs in Ontario.

Three new AECEO “Decent Work CoPs” were created: Early Years Advocates (EYA) London, the Student Early Childhood Educators Ontario (SECEO), and the All Nations Circle of Practice. The AECEO staff joined the Sudbury CoP in person for a community visit and the Early Years Professionals Rise Up Toronto (EYP) for a picnic and movie screening of the film *Scarborough*.

As a culmination to the ongoing Kindergarten Conversations, the AECEO hosted *Voices from the Classroom*, a roundtable with Kindergarten ECEs who shared their stories and experiences.

In total, we hosted 11 Professional Learning Experiences and Conversations, welcoming 4,200+ participants. Other webinars and events included:

- The Power of Us: Celebrating the Federal Child Care Plan
- CWELCC Information for Child Care Centre Boards: Frequently Asked Questions in partnership with the OCBCC and TCBCC.
- Forest Bathing Walk w/ Krista Kilian
- Child Care Brigade at International Labour Day Rally
- The Politics of ECE: Government 101
- Sharing Pandemic Experiences; A Safe Space for Racialized Educators with the OCBCC
- Participation in the International Women’s Day rally and march

The AECEO participated in the National Day of Action led by Child Care Now. We co-hosted a Worth More Day of Action with the OCBCC in Ontario. This initiative included training sessions for community engagement, a resource toolkit of flyers, infographics, media scripts, an MPP breakfast, a Press Conference in the media gallery, and a large rally on the lawn at Queens Park. Local CoPs and child care programs held their own local events, and

ECEs and child care workers shared their stories in a Phone Zap to Minister Lecce, co-hosted with Justice for Workers.

Ethics approval was received and the “Anti-Racism and Decent Work” survey and consultations were launched. Over 800 responses were received from early years professionals.

The AECEO convened a Conference Committee of ECEs from across the province and various roles in the sector to plan the 2023-2024 AECEO virtual conference. The committee developed the theme and logo, determined the dates and format, and chose the presenters.

## 2023-2024

The 2023 AECEO virtual Provincial Conference, *We Raise Each Other Up: ECEs Building Leadership & Learning Communities of Joy, Curiosity, and Hope* welcomed more than 900 participants and 44 ECE presenters across 25 different sessions. The conference included virtual networking and discussion lounges, an online gallery of digital posters, other creative formats, workshops, presentations, and small group conversations.

The AECEO and OCBCC attended the Inclusive Child Care for All Summit and Child Care Now Assembly, supporting our partners and allies. We also supported the OCBCC’s Creating an Anti-Racist Child Care System in Ontario project.

Emerging from the Building Leadership and Learning Communities project, we presented at both the Early Childhood Educators BC (ECEBC) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Alberta (AECEA) provincial provinces. There we discussed the impact and benefit of participation in CoPs.

CoPs were renamed CARE Collectives. Our CARE leads took part in a 3 day in-person strategy retreat, creating deeper connections, aligning work, and learning from one another.

The first in-person AECEO Professional Learning experience since the COVID-19 pandemic took place at Seneca College. We held 13 Professional Learning sessions. This included the AECEOs first Book Club, where we engaged in discussion about the novel *Scarborough* by Catherine Hernandez.

Together, the AECEO and OCBCC host a Provincial Day of Action. This included a rally and phone zap. We also launched the summer campaign *Worth More Wednesdays*. This campaign highlighted the critical role of ECEs and early years staff in the lives and learning experiences of young children - learning experiences we know are directly connected to the working conditions and compensation of the early childhood workforce.

The AECEO again participated in the National Day of Action led by Child Care Now by co-hosting a Day of Action with the OCBCC in Ontario. This day included a rally at Queen's Park in Toronto and a virtual rally hosted online.

After months of advocacy, the Ontario government announced the ECE wage floor would be increased to \$23.86 per hour as of January 1st, 2024.

The AECEO published Program Profiles and Policy Briefs connected to the *Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario*. These briefs were intended to support the sector in decision making and advocacy, and to support the AECEOs policy recommendation of a salary scale. The briefs released in this year included:

- *Program Profile 1: Reimagining Quality Project*
- *Program Profile 2: Learning Enrichment Foundation*
- *Policy Brief 1: Recommendations for a publicly-funded ELCC salary scale and;*
- *Position Paper on a publicly-funded early learning and child care salary scale* which offered a deeper look into our policy recommendation on a salary scale starting at least \$30-40/hr for RECEs, and \$25/hour for non-RECE staff

In partnership with the OCBCC, the AECEO began a new project with funding from the Atkinson Foundation to organize parents to advocate for positive changes in the child care sector. Goals and objectives were created, outreach began, and promo materials were created and shared.

In March, Ontario saw a historic policy win. Bill C-35: *An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada* was adopted unanimously by the House of Commons. This enactment set out the Government of Canada's vision for a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. It also set out the Government of Canada's commitment to maintaining long-term funding relating to early learning and child care to be provided to the provinces and Indigenous peoples.

## 2024-2025

After presenting our Transformative Professional Learning model at the Manitoba Child Care Association annual conference, the Building Leadership and Learning Project came to a close. Staff transitioned their work to focus on the "Decent Work and Professional Pay Project: Mobilizing the ECE Workforce in the Movement for Decent Work", with a Summer Bucket List campaign, inviting participants to see advocacy in their every day actions.

The Parent Organizing team hosted two webinars, created a toolkit, and shared videos to support parents to participate in two press conferences. These two press conferences took place for ECE and Child Care Worker Appreciation Day and as part of the National Days of

Action in collaboration with Child Care Now. The final press conference saw the official public launch of the Parents 4 Child Care, now an AECEO CARE Collective supported by and housed through the OCBCC.

The AECEO Student Blog was created, highlighting the independent projects of ECE students completing their placements and internships with the AECEO.

The AECEO participated in the Days of Action for \$10aDay Child Care led by Child Care Now.

We launched Circle Time with the AECEO, a podcast on all things ECE: the good, the bad, and the sticky. We released the first five episodes. Along with the podcast, an ECE Merchandise store was launched through Redbubble, providing ECE and AECEO merch for purchase to represent the profession and build awareness.

Two surveys were launched, one to better understand *How can the AECEO be better?* and another to gain an updated understanding of the current context of the sector through the *Listening and Storytelling Community Research*.

We continued to publish Program Profiles and Policy Briefs connected to the *Roadmap to Universal Child Care in Ontario*:

- *Program Profile 3: Windsor-Essex Registered Early Childhood Educators Mentorship Program*
- *Policy Brief 2: Ontario Child Care Funding Formula by Dr. Gordon Cleveland*

## 2025 - 2026

In the fall, the Ontario Funding Formula was reviewed, and we hosted information sessions for and with operators, educators, and the Home Child Care Association of Ontario, to better understand its impact. We brought ECE voices directly to decision makers by hosting a panel discussion with ECEs and the then Minister of Children, Families, & Social Development Jenna Sudds, and collaborated with Child Care Now to organize Ontario's 10 Days of Action for \$10-a-Day Child Care. Nationally, the AECEO hosted virtual workshops *Voices for Change: Your \$10aDay Child Care Stories*. We created multiple invitations to become involved, to ensure that many access points were provided including a social media campaign, phone zap, colouring and information pages, an online petition, a rally, and a virtual wrap up/debrief. Shortly after that, the province called a snap election, and we shared voting information, supported local activities through the CARE Collectives, and hosted a professional learning space to discuss how our values are seen in policy and systems.

After two years of collective bargaining and a year of administrative work, the AECEO officially became unionized with CUPE local 2484. As an organization committed to advocating for decent work for ECEs, we are proud to also formalize our decent working conditions into our Collective Agreement. We had an incredible experience negotiating our first collective agreement, it was collaborative and caring, a learning experience, and collectively we created something for which we are truly proud.

The AECEO lifted the voices and needs of ECEs across the province through advocacy and community based work. This took shape through many community based actions, podcast episodes, as well as campaigns to support the early childhood education workforce. In May we shared a Parent MPP training and toolkit. The AECEO stood with Theresa Armstrong re: Bill 191, Childcare and Early Years Workforce Strategy Advisory Committee Act, 2024, demonstrating solidarity as well as a deep commitment to the sector. We engaged in multiple e-actions, for example the “Tell Trudeau & Ford: Support Educators and \$10 a day child care for families - not privatization” action. The AECEO hosted sessions for educators as well as operators on the CWELCC funding formula. We also hosted the “10\$ a day and decent pay” rally at Queens Park joined by educators across the province. We were joined by elected MP’s Chrystia Freeland and Jagmeet Singh and many members of our wonderful community for the International Women’s Day March where childcare was a widely talked about campaign issue leading into the federal election.

Looking to the future of the workforce, the AECEO staff team spent time engaged in class talks across Ontario, career fairs and supporting student advocacy at Sheridan College, Humber College and George Brown College, and was so lucky to celebrate ECE appreciation day in person at Mohawk College. We have had the immense pleasure of meeting with so many amazing ECE students across the province; students who are constantly awe-inspiring with their critical thinking skills, engagement, and care and compassion. We connected with more than 1,700 students, presented 37 class talks, and visited 13 colleges and universities.

Many exciting initiatives took place this year. The Decent Work Common Table, and AECEO CARE Collectives continued to be spaces designed for the ELCC workforce, partners, and allies to come together for ongoing connection and collaboration. These spaces allowed us to gain a broader understanding of each other’s perspectives through story sharing, making connections between working conditions, lived experience, and policy, asking questions, sharing experiences, and deepening relationships as we “care out loud”. Our new seasonal policy newsletters brought the work of the AECEO and the hottest news in ELCC policy right to our communities’ email inbox. We also launched our podcast, *Circle Time with the AECEO* to discuss all things ECE culture: the good, the bad, and the sticky. Our new RedBubble shop created fun ELCC-related designs to spread the word about our community. Finally, our Student Blog was launched as a space to publicly host the projects completed by placement and internship students. All of these new opportunities connect the every day practice of ELCC professionals to policy and their communities.

In reflection of and learning from the past seven years, the Guiding Committee set out to review our work so far, and recommit to a path forward. Together, we captured the incredible work of the Guiding Committee and shared our reflections in our [Winter 2025 eceLINK contribution](#), including many eceLINK articles, professional learning offerings, and the creation of the All Nations Circle of Practice. In our meetings, the Guiding Committee recommitted to our goals and explored ideas for new ways to action them, and share and invite others into our work (there is lots to look forward to!). We were also grateful to have a contribution from Elder Brenda Mason and her grandson Keaton in the [Spring/Summer 2024 eceLINK](#) issue, which reminds us of the profound wisdom children share with us when we slow down and pay attention.

Over the summer, we began the AECEO Community Visits, starting out in Waterloo Region. Being together in joyful and meaningful ways is key to building our power as a community and creating the hopeful worlds ECEs deserve. We also shared the AECEO Summer Challenge. We took time to recognize the advocacy ECEs do in their everyday activities, and found summer-friendly ways to engage with our representatives. We hosted an e-action to support educators and \$10 a day child care for families - not privatization. Hundreds of people signed the action hoping to ensure that the early learning and child care workforce had decent work and pay and that the non-profit and public child care sectors were stable, thriving and expanding. We shared a new policy brief, the Ontario Child Care Funding Formula, and a new program profile highlighting the Windsor-Essex RECE Mentorship Program. Over this year we were lucky enough to:

- Hosted 19 opportunities to connect with the AECEO - in person and on line
- Collaborated on 3 e-actions and open letters
- Attended 6 career fairs at colleges and universities
- Produced 5 major policy briefs and updates
- Created 9 resources for our community - podcasts, merch drops, and members-only resources
- Attended 5 platform consultations with Provincial and Federal parties
- Participated in 10 Days of Action
- Spoke up at 15 opportunities to represent ECE voices and experiences to the wider community

None of this work could be possible if we did not come together as a community and share our values and stories with one another. Our combined dedication and passion cannot be ignored. We are so strong when we stand up together, raise each other up, and stay united in what we deserve: professional pay, decent work, respect, and recognition.

*2026-2027*

Currently in progress. We can't wait to see what the next year will bring!