



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Ontario Public School Boards' Association
439 University Avenue, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8
Tel: (416) 340-2540
Fax: (416) 340-7571
webmaster@opsba.org
www.opsba.org

Michael Barrett
President

Gail Anderson
Executive Director

August 27, 2013

OPSBA Submission for the Review of the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007*

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) represents public district school boards across Ontario. Together our members serve the educational needs of almost 70% of Ontario's elementary and secondary school students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality, or religious affiliation.

We understand that this discussion paper is part of a statutory review of the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007* and welcome the opportunity to provide feedback and comments from a school board perspective that recognizes Early Childhood Educators as part of an important and growing employee group within school boards.

When announced in 2009, our Association wholeheartedly embraced the fundamental importance of the full day early learning program (FDK), recognizing that investing in our youngest children in the early years represents the most far-reaching and responsible investment we can make in Ontario's future. We stated on numerous occasions that school boards would continue to work together and in partnership with the relevant ministries, the early childhood education community and municipalities to ensure that the program delivery model and implementation strategy were responsive to the diverse needs of children and families and respectful of established board community partnerships.

With regards to this review, OPSBA recently met with representatives of the College of Early Childhood Education and plans to continue sharing information and communicating about common issues. The review's discussion paper had two main questions and we have added additional comments that we hope will lead to future conversations.

Question 1 Are the provisions in the Act adequate for achieving the objectives of the Act (i.e. public protection, high standards for the profession of early childhood education and accountability)?

OPSBA is supportive of the College and its work to provide a code of ethics and standards of practice for its members. By establishing these measures, the College has shown that ECEs are professionals who value accountability. The College has outlined plans for future professional development opportunities that are to be self-managed, web-based and affordable. OPSBA will work with the College to find ways for school boards to support this important initiative.

Question 2 What changes to the Act, if any, should be considered by the government to improve the operations of the College in carrying out its roles and responsibilities and supports the government's vision for the early years?

Section 7, Clause 3 states that one of the College's objectives is, "To provide for the ongoing education of members of the College". As stated above, school boards are supportive of professional development opportunities for our employees. Furthermore (and as now mandated in the Education Act), we recognize ECEs as professionals co-delivering the FDK program in our schools. We believe that additional PD should be focussed on the team approach with regards to FDK with the goal being the development of a positive, cooperative and professional working relationship between teachers and their ECE classroom partners. We would support a future dialogue about an approach that emphasizes enhanced credentials such as an ECE Team Certification. Along with that, we would also request a substantial level of local flexibility that allows school boards, as employers, to determine the best method to deliver this team PD.

Part V of the Act pertains to complaints and investigations. In order to help support public interest, we recommend putting in place mechanisms that allow for easier and reciprocal information sharing when dealing with investigations that involve a teacher and an ECE. Both employee groups have their own regulatory body that conducts investigations (the Ontario College of Teachers for teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators for early childhood educators). There may be circumstances when complaints are given to both colleges and it would be beneficial if common information was appropriately shared. As employers, it would make sense to have the same information sent to both groups. We suggest the government discuss this further with both regulatory bodies.

While not part of the actual review's mandated questions, the following comments were mentioned by our members:

- There should be funding provided by the government that allows school boards to provide preparation time for ECEs on their own and along with their teacher partners. Many ECEs are paid on an hourly basis but not paid for preparation time.
- School boards would appreciate more transition support (mentoring, knowledge of school board governance, etc.) for ECEs who are moving from a child care environment to a school board.
- Increased communication and understanding of the different titles used within the early learning sector (ECE, RECE, DECE) would be appreciated.
- We would recommend greater access for certification be explored by the College, Specifically, financial subsidies for initial certification and renewals. ECEs working part time, casually and/or actively seeking employment may experience financial strain with the cost of certification and annual renewals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments and we look forward to the Minister's written report following this review.

Sincerely,



Michael Barrett,
President