

ECE Workforce Knowledge HUB

Dr. Daniel Foster
Policy Analyst
Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development
OISE | University of Toronto

Lisa Taylor
Community Pedagogist
Early Years and Child Care
County of Dufferin

Atkinson Centre
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

What is the ECE Workforce Knowledge Hub?

A pan-Canadian network connecting research, expertise, and policy

- Convened by the Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto.
- Brings together ELCC researchers and knowledge mobilization experts from across Canada.
- Supports provinces and territories and Ontario Service System Managers during transitions under Canada-Wide ELCC agreements.
- Provides timely, evidence-informed insights to inform planning and decision-making.

BRIDGING RESEARCH, PRACTICE-BASED KNOWLEDGE, AND GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

Who are we?

A pan-Canadian network spanning research, public policy, practice, and knowledge mobilization

Emis Akbari, PhD
ELCC policy · workforce and quality

Kerry McCuaig
Policy development · integrated services

Daniel Foster, PhD
Policy evaluation · labour market data

Elizabeth Dhuey, PhD
Economics · equitable access

Kim Dreaddy
Social justice · inclusion and workforce rights

Shelly Mehta, PhD
Social justice education · equity and inclusion

Jessie-Lee McIsaac, PhD
Community-engaged research · equity

David Philpott, PhD
Inclusive education · child development

Yolande Pottie-Sherman, PhD
Immigration · care infrastructure

Dominique Tambosso
Professional learning · knowledge sharing

Rob Santos, PhD
Child development · policy research

Simon Black, PhD
Care economy · labour relations and workforce rights

Purpose of the Knowledge Hub

Supporting evidence-informed decision-making

Access to expertise

Connect governments with specialized research and practical knowledge.

Responsive support

Address emerging ELCC policy questions within tight timelines.

System development

Inform policy development, planning, and implementation.

Evidence, not advocacy

Support decisions without promoting a particular policy approach.

The Hub is designed to be an accessible, responsive resource for governments

EXPERTISE

A broad range of specialized knowledge

Drawing on an interdisciplinary, pan-Canadian network

Workforce and policy

Workforce policy • labour economics • immigration • governance

System planning

Service organization • financial modelling • system development

Research and evaluation

Data analysis • program evaluation • quality monitoring • inclusion

Education and learning

Post-secondary training • professional development • knowledge mobilization

When new needs arise, the Hub connects governments with additional experts through its networks.

How the Knowledge Hub works

Flexible, collaborative, and shaped by government needs

1	**Knowledge exchange**	Public webinars and confidential, closed discussions.
2	**Research and policy insights**	Policy scans, research synthesis, and practical resources.
3	**Knowledge mobilization**	Podcasts, videos, training modules, and learning materials.
4	**Expert connections**	Individual, small-group, or collective engagement.

Engagement is confidential and non-attributable.

The Knowledge Hub in Action

Selected examples of collaboration, research, and knowledge mobilization

PROJECT EXAMPLE 01

Leeds and Grenville

Evaluating the Child Care Workforce Affordability Strategy

Local pilot: free licensed child care for eligible child care employees, designed to support recruitment and retention.

THE HUB'S CONTRIBUTION

- Partnered with the Leeds and Grenville Service System Manager to examine implementation and early outcomes.
- Gathered perspectives from educators, supervisors, operators, and municipal staff.
- Engaged Hub economist Dr. Elizabeth Dhuey for a cost-benefit analysis comparing the benefit with alternative workforce investments.

2025 PILOT SNAPSHOT

110 staff • 177 children

Supported during 2025

VALUE: Evidence to inform local decisions—and lessons for other jurisdictions considering similar workforce supports.

PROJECT EXAMPLE 02

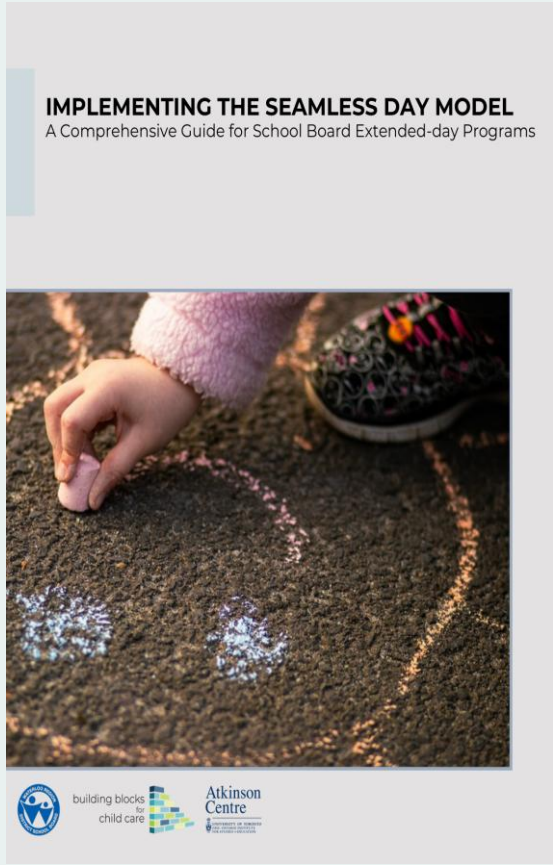
Waterloo Region: Seamless Day

Supporting school board-operated extended-day programs

A practical implementation guide and three short videos, developed with regional and sector partners.

THE HUB'S CONTRIBUTION

- Co-developed a comprehensive guide with the Waterloo Region District School Board and Building Blocks for Child Care (B2C2).
- Translated implementation experience into practical guidance on partnerships, staffing, governance, finances, and program operations.
- Helped develop three short videos exploring the partnership and benefits for children, families, and the workforce.



VALUE: A practical model and resources for other school boards exploring integrated before- and after-school care.

PROJECT EXAMPLE 03

Better Together: Policy Collaboration

Working with Ontario Children's Service System Managers

Collaborating to translate workforce research into timely, accessible policy resources.

THE HUB'S CONTRIBUTION

- Collaborate with Better Together, a network of Ontario Children's Service System Managers focused on strengthening early learning and child care.
- Produced "*Lowering the Bar,*" a policy brief outlining the dangers of de-qualification of ECEs amid workforce shortages.
- Brought together research and cross-jurisdictional evidence on educator preparation, staffing standards, and implications for program quality.



VALUE: Connecting system-manager priorities with research to inform workforce and quality policy discussions.

PROJECT EXAMPLE 04

Bright Beginnings Podcast Series

Insights into Early Childhood Education · A Better Together series

Making research, policy, and lived experience accessible through audio and learning resources.

Better Together For Early Years

THE HUB'S CONTRIBUTION

- Developed a podcast series in collaboration with BT featuring educators, researchers, and sector leaders exploring key issues in early learning and child care.
- Produced eight English-language episodes, with a ninth French-language episode in development, covering inclusion, gender diversity, and the value of ECE.
- Created episode transcripts, French translations, and supporting learning modules with resources and reflective questions.



VALUE: Accessible, bilingual learning tools for students, educators, policymakers, and advocates.

PROJECT EXAMPLE 05

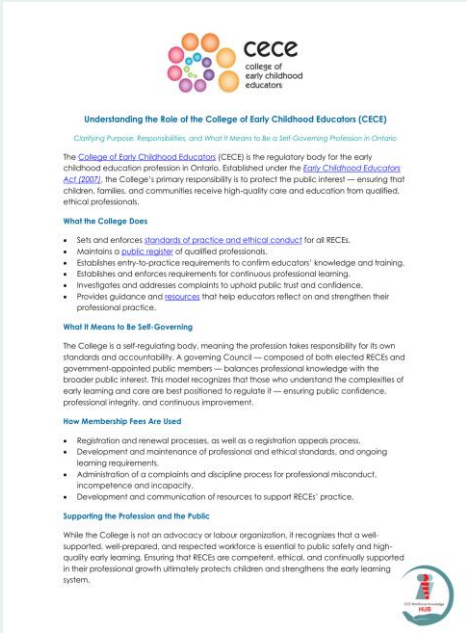
College of Early Childhood Educators

Clarifying the role of Ontario's professional regulator

Co-developing a concise resource to explain how professional regulation protects children and families.

THE HUB'S CONTRIBUTION

- Worked with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) to develop an accessible overview of its mandate and responsibilities.
- Explained professional standards, entry-to-practice requirements, continuous learning, and complaints and discipline processes.
- Clarified self-regulation, public accountability, and how membership fees support the College's regulatory functions.



cece college of early childhood educators

Understanding the Role of the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)

Clarifying Purpose, Responsibilities, and What It Means to Be a Self-Governing Profession in Ontario

The College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) is the regulatory body for the early childhood education profession in Ontario. Established under the Early Childhood Educators Act (2007), the College's primary responsibility is to protect the public interest — ensuring that children, families, and communities receive high-quality care and education from qualified, ethical professionals.

What the College Does

- Sets and enforces standards of practice and ethical conduct for all RECEs.
- Maintains a public register of qualified professionals.
- Establishes entry-to-practice requirements to confirm educators' knowledge and training.
- Establishes and enforces requirements for continuous professional learning.
- Investigates and addresses complaints to uphold public trust and confidence.
- Provides guidance and resources that help educators reflect on and strengthen their professional practice.

What It Means to Be Self-Governing

The College is a self-regulating body, meaning the profession takes responsibility for its own standards and accountability. A governing Council — composed of both elected RECEs and government-appointed public members — balances professional knowledge with the broader public interest. This model recognizes that those who understand the complexities of early learning and care are best positioned to regulate it — ensuring public confidence, professional integrity, and continuous improvement.

How Membership Fees Are Used

- Registration and renewal processes, as well as a registration appeals process.
- Development and maintenance of professional and ethical standards, and ongoing learning requirements.
- Administration of a complaints and discipline process for professional misconduct, incompetence and incapacity.
- Development and communication of resources to support RECEs' practice.

Supporting the Profession and the Public

While the College is not an advocacy or labour organization, it recognizes that a well-supported, well-prepared, and respected workforce is essential to public safety and high-quality early learning. Ensuring that RECEs are competent, ethical, and continually supported in their professional growth ultimately protects children and strengthens the early learning system.

VALUE: Helping educators and system partners understand the College's role in public protection and professional accountability.

PROJECT EXAMPLE 07

Niagara Region: Child Care Economic Study

Examining the local economic value of high-quality child care

An economic study examining how investments in high-quality child care contribute to Niagara Region's local economy.

THE HUB EXPERT'S RESEARCH

- Hub economist Dr. Elizabeth Dhuey is conducting an economic analysis of the contribution of child care to Niagara Region's local economy.
- Using Niagara as a case study, the research will examine how investments in high-quality child care generate wider regional economic benefits.
- The study will seek to quantify the economic value of local child care investment, producing evidence to inform policy and investment decisions.

RESEARCH FOCUS

Niagara Region

Local economic case study

Economic value

Of child care investment

VALUE: Locally grounded economic evidence on the benefits of child care investment

PROJECT EXAMPLE 06

Open & Closed Knowledge-Exchange Sessions

Webinars, technical briefings, and discussions for government and sector partners

Public webinars and confidential government-focused sessions share evidence, practical lessons, and sector expertise.

EXAMPLES OF TOPICS COVERED

- Special Needs Resourcing and Inclusion: Different SNR models, staffing challenges, regional approaches to inclusion, and equitable access for children with disabilities.
- ECE Workforce and Quality: The importance of educator qualifications, training models, compensation, and workforce stability in supporting high-quality programs and positive child outcomes.
- Equity and Diversity: Gender expansiveness, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, and inclusive practices in early learning environments.
- Economic Value: The economic and social value and return on investment of early learning and child.

VALUE: Timely, responsive knowledge exchange that connects research with questions facing policymakers and service system managers.

RELATED ATKINSON CENTRE INITIATIVE

Knowing Our Numbers

Understanding Ontario's early years and child care workforce

A province-wide workforce survey generating evidence for workforce planning, policy development, and investment.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

- The first survey (2024) gathered input from almost 6,000 early years and child care professionals across Ontario.
- Produced provincial findings, 30 regional reports, and a Northern Perspectives report to highlight local workforce realities.
- Knowing Our Numbers 2 (2026) brings together 46 regional Service System Managers, the CECE, and researchers to track change.

VALUE: Provincial and local workforce evidence that complements the Hub's research, policy support, and knowledge exchange.

RELATED ATKINSON CENTRE INITIATIVES

Research, Monitoring & Knowledge Sharing

Complementary initiatives supporting evidence-informed policy and practice

Two ways the Atkinson Centre shares evidence and connects policy, research, and practice.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT

ECER

Pan-Canadian monitoring of early childhood education and care systems.

- Tracks policy developments across provinces and territories.
- Uses comparable benchmarks on governance, funding, access, learning environments, and accountability.
- Informs system planning, policy discussions, and investment.

ATKINSON CENTRE

Weekly Newsletter

Regular updates connecting the early learning and child care sector with timely information.

- Highlights research, reports, policy developments, and sector news.
- Shares upcoming events, resources, and learning opportunities.
- Supports ongoing knowledge exchange with educators, policymakers, researchers, and partners.

VALUE: System-level evidence and accessible updates that complement the Hub's responsive research and policy support.

THANK YOU

Working Together to Build a Strong System

Connecting local priorities with evidence, expertise, and practical solutions.

HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER:

Bring us your questions	Emerging issues, policy challenges, and local initiatives
Connect with expertise	Research, evaluation, workforce policy, and system planning
Learn across jurisdictions	Exchange promising practices and lessons from across Canada

You can engage with the HUB through Atkinson's Centre directly or individually with any HUB expert.
eceknowledgehub.ca