

About AECEA

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta is a non-profit, member-based society that serves as a voice for Alberta's early learning and child care workforce.

AECEA supports and empowers early childhood educators in their efforts to gain recognition for the important work they do. It provides information and access to research and resources. It also administers grant funding and provides opportunities for ongoing professional learning.

Together with its members and partners, AECEA advocates for the recognition of the field of early childhood education as a profession that commands the respect, support, compensation and influence that this important work deserves.

History

AECEA traces its beginnings to 1987, when a grassroots network of child care organizations* formed in response to the Alberta government's proposed changes to day care funding.

The network's lobbying efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. Government cuts to day care operating allowances sparked a child care crisis, and it became nearly impossible to find qualified staff who would work for the minimal wages that programs could afford. In spite of this setback, the network continued its efforts to advocate for quality child care delivered by qualified staff. In 2003, it partnered with the Alberta government, the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Alberta Family Child Care Association to implement an accreditation standards system for the province.

* The early network included the Alberta Association for Young Children, the Early Childhood Professional Association and the United Child Care Association of Alberta.

As the network's membership and authority increased, a more formal organizational structure evolved. The **Alberta Child Care Network Association** (ACCNA) was incorporated under the Society's Act in 2004. Over time, although its legal name remained unchanged, ACCNA became known as the **Alberta Child Care Association**, or ACCA.*

In the fall of 2016, members voted to change the name from ACCA to AECEA—the **Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta**. AECEA's new legal name reinforces the association's focus on early learning and child care *educators*. It also reinforces the association's connection to sister organizations in other provinces.

Some of AECEA's Canadian Compatriots

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador (established 1989)

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (established 1950)

Early Childhood Educators of BC (established 1969)

Members

AECEA represents early childhood educators who work with children in a range of licensed and regulated settings, including day care centres, preschools, out-of-school care programs and family day homes. Individuals who support the work of early childhood educators are also eligible for membership; these members include post-secondary faculty and students in the early childhood education field.

* In a January 2009 bylaw change, the name "Alberta Child Care Association" is noted as an alternative to the association's formal name, which remained the Alberta Child Care Network Association.

In 2013, the membership voted to change the association's fiscal year end from August 31 to March 31 to correspond with government funding cycles. The change was filed with Alberta's Corporate Registry on February 4, 2015.

Organizations that support AECEA's goals are eligible for membership as non-voting associates.

AECEA takes the position that allowing members from all facets of child care provides opportunities for education and information-sharing. Collaboration across delivery systems is a first step toward the system-wide change that must take place to professionalize Alberta's early learning and child care workforce.

Membership Categories

AECEA offers three membership categories:

- **Professional members** are Alberta-certified early childhood educators and post-secondary educators who work in the field of early learning and child care. This category also includes staff and contractors who work for or in support of licensed child care programs and approved family day home agencies.
- **Student members** are enrolled in post-secondary early learning and child care programs in Alberta. Students in leadership, management, human resources and other programs related to early learning and child care are also eligible for AECEA membership.
- **Associate members** are agencies or groups that support AECEA's goals.

Professional members and student members have voting rights at AECEA's general meetings. Associate members are welcome to attend AECEA meetings, but cannot vote.

As shown in Figure 7, AECEA currently has close to 800 members. The organizations in AECEA's associate membership category represent thousands of early childhood educators as well as staff and contractors of approved family day homes and licensed child care programs in Alberta.

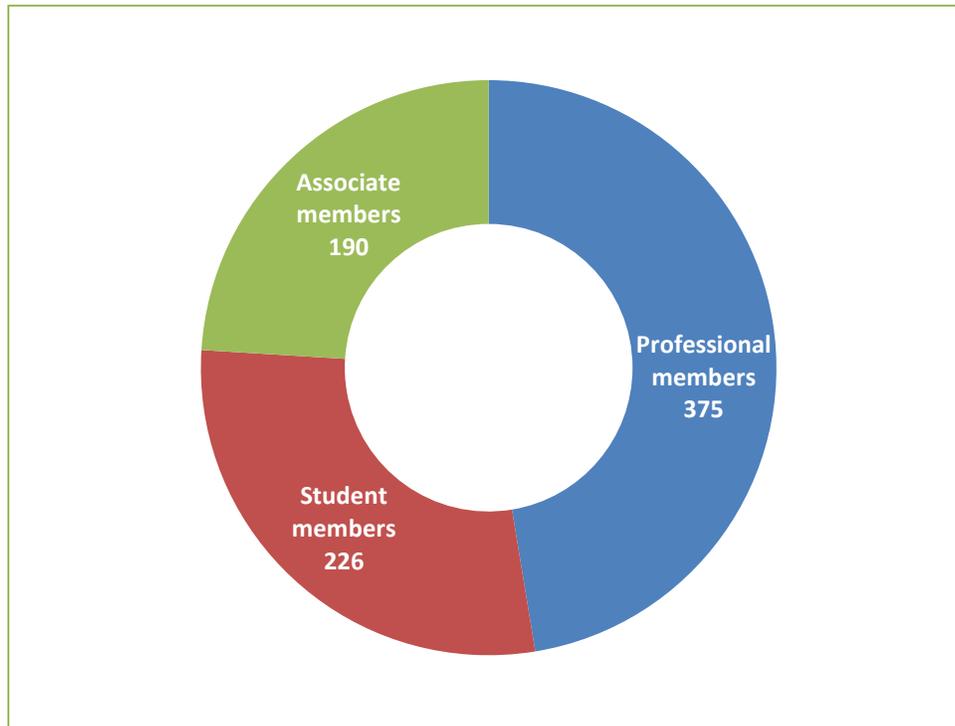


Figure 7. On December 1, 2017, AECEA's membership numbered 791 individuals and organizations.

Membership Fees

Membership in AECEA is free for full-time students enrolled in publicly funded post-secondary early childhood education programs in Alberta. Providing free student membership is a deliberate organizational and leadership development strategy. AECEA's hope is that engaging students in the association's work will ensure these individuals' engagement and support when they start their careers as early childhood educators.

Part-time students pay a reduced membership fee of \$50 per year.

Annual fees for associate members are \$125.

Annual fees for professional members are \$125.

Professional members whose employers participate in AECEA's group health plan pay \$95 toward their annual fees. The \$30 balance is paid by the health plan provider. (See p. 28 for details.)

Membership Benefits

Coming soon...

AECEA is developing a members'-only area on its website. It will include a job board, webinars, resources, Q & A and links to the latest research and best practices in the field of early learning and child care.

PROFESSIONAL AND STUDENT MEMBERS

AECEA's professional and student members are part of the association's strong, united voice on legislation, policy, funding, training, professional learning and other issues that affect early childhood educators.

AECEA's professional and student members enjoy the following benefits:

- the opportunity to contribute to AECEA's advocacy for accessible, affordable, high-quality child care delivered by a respected, well-compensated professional early learning and child care workforce
- opportunities for personal and professional growth through networking with colleagues and leaders in the field, including access to a members-only Facebook site
- a monthly e-newsletter, *Networking News*, that includes updates on AECEA's activities, information about professional learning opportunities and events, links to the latest research and inspirational stories from the field
- discounts on AECEA-sponsored workshops and events (including the popular annual conference, which is usually sold out)
- reduced fees for selected educational and professional learning offerings sponsored by AECEA's partners
- access to a group health benefits plan (available to professional and student members whose employers are AECEA associate members)

- reduced membership fees for professional members whose employers participate in AECEA's group health benefits plan
- AECEA's support and organizational backing to empower personal advocacy for the recognition of early childhood educators as well-qualified, well-compensated professionals
- opportunities to develop leadership skills and make a difference by getting involved in the association
- free affiliate membership in the Canadian Child Care Federation, which is a cost saving of \$65
 - **CCCF affiliate membership** includes discounts on books and resources, weekly email updates and access to the federation's members-only quarterly journal.
 - AECEA pays the CCCF \$25 per member per year to provide affiliate membership in the CCCF. Affiliate membership in the federation provides the same benefits as individual membership. The regular rate for CCCF membership is \$65 for individuals and \$90 for organizations.

Both AECEA members and the public have access to the association's online events calendar.

Certified child development supervisors who work in day care or out-of-school care programs or in family day home agencies can access professional development funding through AECEA even if they are not members of the association. (Funding is not available for child development supervisors who work in preschools or as family day home providers.)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

AECEA's associate members enjoy the following benefits:

- free affiliate membership in the Canadian Child Care Federation, which is a cost saving of \$90
- access to a number of workforce- and workplace-related benefits and discounts, including the following:
 - a comprehensive group health benefit plan that offers life and disability insurance, coverage for prescription drugs, dental and vision care, and medical coverage for travellers
 - a 20% discount on TimeSavR, web-based software which is specifically designed to help child care professionals and organizations manage staffing, attendance, payments and other administrative tasks
 - access to Foster Park Brokers commercial insurance, which is tailored to the early learning and child care industry
- credits toward meeting the requirements for child care program accreditation
 - Membership in AECEA helps child care programs comply with Accreditation Standard 5, which requires that programs “collaborate with community organizations and services to respond to the needs of children and families they serve.” Membership in AECEA also helps programs prepare quality enhancement plans. These are required under Accreditation Standard 6, which mandates “continuous quality improvement...demonstrated through ongoing self-monitoring and evaluation processes.”

Group Health Plan: Responding to Workforce Needs

AECEA is proactive in developing business and service relationships that respond to its members' needs. For example, many early childhood educators face the dual challenge of low wages and no benefits. In 2008, AECEA partnered with a group health insurance provider to help address this issue.

Participation in AECEA's group health plan is restricted to employers who are associate members. The health plan service provider pays AECEA \$30 for each employee covered by an associate member's plan. If the employee is an AECEA professional member, the association applies this payment toward the individual's annual membership fee, reducing it from \$125 to \$95.

As of December 2017, 628 early childhood educators received health benefits through AECEA's group health plan, generating a gross annual revenue of approximately \$18,800 for the association. Of this group, 140 (approximately one in five) were AECEA professional members who paid a reduced membership fee as a result of their employers' participation in the health plan.

AECEA's health benefit program is currently administered by Benefex Inc. Insurance coverage is provided through Co-operators.

Growing Strong

AECEA’s membership has steadily increased over the years. The handful of individuals and organizations that were members in 2005 is now nearly 800 strong. Historical membership numbers are not available, but as shown in Figure 8, the growth in membership revenues tells the tale.

AECEA’s membership revenues have almost doubled over the past two years.

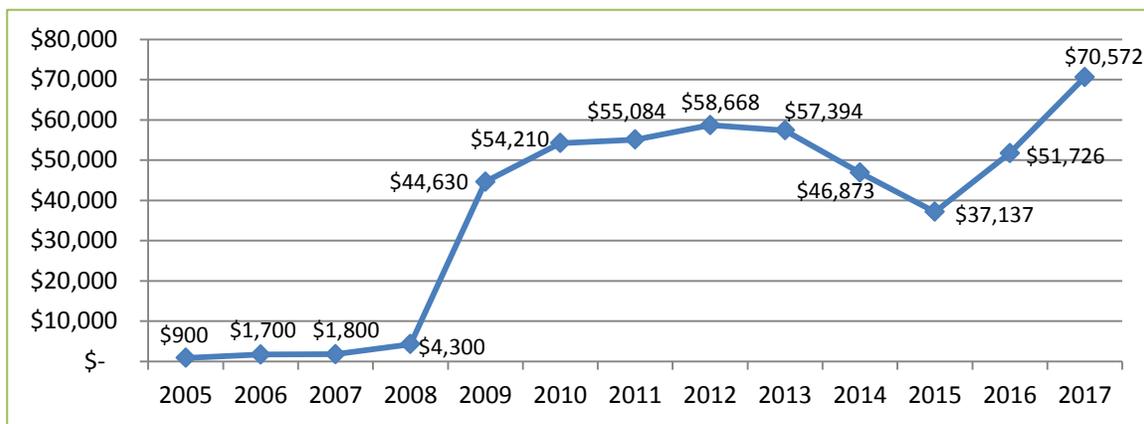


Figure 8. Growth in AECEA’s membership revenues from 2005 to 2017. * Membership fees remained the same throughout this period.

* The decline in membership revenues between 2014 and 2015 is a function of the change in AECEA’s fiscal year end from August 31 to March 31. The membership revenues reported for 2015 are for the seven-month period from September 1, 2014, to March 31, 2015.

The decline in membership revenues between 2013 and 2014 is a function of organizational stress. AECEA lost its paid staff during this period, and board membership was reduced to three people who managed to keep the organization viable against great odds. With the recruitment of a full board complement in 2015, membership revenues have continued to grow.

Organizational Structure and Governance

AECEA is a non-profit organization registered under Alberta’s Societies Act. AECEA’s operations are governed by its bylaws. The bylaws outline the responsibilities of AECEA’s board of directors, which oversees the association’s budget, planning, staffing and development. The bylaws also set out membership categories and member privileges.

Staff

AECEA has operated almost entirely on volunteer power for most of its thirty-plus-year existence. Consultants have been hired to assist with special projects, but the association did not have staff until recently. A full-time executive director—AECEA’s first paid staff member—was hired in 2006.* This position was filled until 2013, when finances forced a different staffing model.

AECEA currently has a full-time office administrator whose primary responsibility is managing professional development funding for AECEA’s Child Development Supervisor Professional Development Funding program. AECEA administers this program on behalf of the Alberta government’s Ministry of Children’s Services. AECEA’s office administrator also manages the association’s operations, website, communications and member and community relations.

Policy and procedures

Since 2013, AECEA has had a personnel policies manual that outlines standards of conduct, time-off benefits, compensation and other guidelines for staff.

* AECEA’s executive directors were Tim Baier (2006–2008), Karen Baretta (2008–2010) and Natalie Weller (2010–2013).

Volunteers

AECEA is a grassroots organization that runs on the passion, commitment and hard work of volunteers. Each year, thousands of hours of people power make it possible for AECEA to achieve big goals with a small budget.

AECEA’s volunteers hail from the association’s membership and partners. Board members alone contribute close to 5,000 hours of unpaid time to AECEA projects each year.* (See Table 4.) This is the equivalent of 2.6 full-time staff members. Assuming \$85,000 annual salaries commensurate with board members’ education and experience, this represents a financial contribution of more than \$220,000 per year.

Task	Hours Per Individual	Total Hours	Estimates
Monthly phone meetings	24	240	2 hours per meeting x 12 months
Quarterly face-to-face meetings	32	320	8 hours per meeting x 4 meetings (without travel time)
Research	24	240	2 hours per month x 12 months
Board communications	104	1,040	2 hours per week x 52 weeks
Stakeholder outreach	40	480	20 days (160 hours) by AECEA's chair and past chair plus 40 hours for each additional board member per year
Committee responsibilities	252	2,520	21 hours per month x 12 months
TOTALS:	476	4,560	

Table 4. An estimate of volunteer hours contributed by AECEA's nine-member board of directors and its board-appointed special advisor, 2017

*This is a conservative estimate. Board members spent thousands more hours each year in the early days—to launch AECEA, to administer hundreds of professional learning bursaries and grants without the support of paid staff, and to research, design and implement complex projects like the association’s ten-year development framework. Between 2014 and 2017, it was not unusual for board members and the board adviser to devote 80 hours per month to AECEA activities. This represents a total contribution of 9,600 hours per year—or nearly 5.5 full-time staff equivalents.

Table 5 shows additional volunteer time that AECEA members contribute to their organization.

Task	Hours per year
Financial management (1 member)	240
Child care licensing review committee (12 members)	720
Conference and Leaders Day committees (15 members)	600
Professional learning and development committee (4 members)	434
TOTALS:	1,994

Table 5. Selected volunteer contributions to AECEA, 2017

Volunteers need support

AECEA is tremendously fortunate to have a solid base of dedicated volunteers. But an organization needs more than volunteer power if it is to thrive. To function effectively, it must be well funded and well resourced.

In previous decades, volunteer burn-out and the lack of resources led to a lack of confidence in AECEA and a decline in membership. AECEA’s success in securing government funding to support the ongoing professional learning of early childhood educators has helped to reverse this trend. It has also provided spin-off benefits for the organization. Government funding pays a portion of AECEA’s administrative costs and makes it possible for the association to carry on its important work on behalf of Alberta’s early learning and child care workforce.

Board

A working board of up to nine directors is the legal authority of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta. The board develops AECEA’s strategic direction and operational plans. Working in collaboration with staff, members and community stakeholders, it also oversees the association’s programs, finances and day-to-day operations.

Board members are elected at AECEA’s annual general meeting and serve for terms of one, two or three years. Staggered terms help to prevent volunteer burn-out and provide flexibility for members who might not be able to make multi-year commitments. Staggered terms ensure a continual influx of new ideas while ensuring continuity within the organization. They also maximize the opportunity for AECEA members to take on leadership roles. An added bonus is that newly elected directors are mentored by longer-serving members of the board.

New board members are recruited each year. To the extent possible, recruitment efforts attempt to ensure representation from across the province, from different parts of the child care community and from outside the field. Board recruitment also aims to solicit specific skills to meet current organizational needs.

AECEA’s board members represent early childhood educators and organizations from across the province. They are dedicated, visionary and highly qualified front-line educators, program administrators, mentors, academics and community leaders who are deeply committed to AECEA’s mission. They bring a wealth of experience to the table.

AECEA board members volunteer their time and expertise. Their only compensation is for approved out-of-pocket expenses.

Voices of experience

Collectively, AECEA’s nine board members have more than 200 years of experience in early learning and child care.

Appendix 2 (see p. 96) includes biographies of AECEA’s 2017–18 board members and special advisor. It also includes a list of the association’s board chairs from 2004 (when ACCNA, the Alberta Child Care Network Association was incorporated) to date.

ACCNA is AECEA’s former name.

DIRECTORS AND ADVISORS

AECEA's bylaws stipulate that board members (directors) elect a chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary among themselves. These four directors constitute AECEA's board executive:

- The board **chair** provides leadership, chairs and coordinates board meetings, and ensures that AECEA's bylaws are properly followed. The chair also handles AECEA's media relations and prepares presentations and key messages about the association's purpose, role, goals and plans. These key messages guide AECEA's board and staff in their communications with members, stakeholders and the public.
- The **vice-chair** acts in the absence of the chair.
- The **treasurer** oversees AECEA's finances.
- The **secretary** creates and maintains minutes of board meetings and ensures that AECEA's corporate responsibilities are met.

All directors who serve on AECEA's board share responsibility for community liaison, fundraising, committee work (with the support of other association members), special events and effective governance.

The board may appoint advisors, as required. These individuals do not need to be AECEA members.

Playing by the rules

AECEA has job descriptions for its elected and appointed board members. All members of the board receive an orientation manual and follow the association's code of conduct and conflict of interest policy.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The AECEA board of directors is a working board. Every board member is expected to take on one or more committee responsibilities. The chair is an ex officio member of all AECEA committees.

The following are AECEA's standing committees:

- The **Governance Committee** develops policy and ensures that AECEA's bylaws and objectives are followed and kept up to date.
- The **Human Resources Committee** deals with personnel issues, including hiring, orientation, discipline, evaluation and supervision of AECEA's staff.
- The **Professional Learning and Development Committee** applies for and oversees professional development grant funding from Alberta Children's Services. It develops grant administration processes and prepares grant-related financial statements and progress reports. The committee undertakes research and engages with post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders in the early learning and child care sector. Its projects include developing a framework for advancing Alberta's workforce of early childhood educators. (For details, see p. 67.)
- The **Membership Committee** develops and implements strategies to recruit new members. Its work includes marketing as well as member retention and recognition.
- The **Nominating Committee** issues annual calls for nomination to AECEA's board of directors and prepares a slate of candidates for consideration at the association's annual general meeting.

Ad hoc committees are created as needed. As of January 2018, AECEA has three ad hoc committees:

- AECEA’s **Awards Committee** manages the application process, vets nominations and selects the winner of AECEA’s annual Dr. Sherrill Brown Award of Distinction. The award recognizes AECEA members who have at least 10 years of experience in early learning and child care and who have demonstrated innovation and professional excellence in pedagogical practice, partnership, research, leadership or education. Winners receive an engraved crystal plaque and a framed certificate, which are presented at AECEA’s annual conference. Winners are also acknowledged at the Government of Alberta’s annual Child Development Professional Awards of Excellence.
- AECEA’s **Child Care Licensing Regulation Review Committee** (established in July 2016) monitors legislative developments related to Alberta’s early learning and child care sector—particularly those that affect the workforce. This twelve-person committee of AECEA members represents a broad cross-section of the child care sector, including representatives from family day homes, centre-based child care programs, out-of-school care programs and rural communities. Its mandate includes developing recommendations for higher levels of education for early childhood educators.
- AECEA’s **Conference Committee** plans and manages AECEA’s popular annual two-day conference for child care educators. (See p. 56 for details.)

The Dr. Sherrill Brown Award of Distinction

Dr. Sherrill Brown (1950–2013) was an inspired leader, researcher, educator and advocate who served three terms at the helm of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (at the time when it was still known as the Alberta Child Care Network Association). Sherrill was a research officer and taught in the Early Learning and Child Care program at MacEwan University. She was instrumental in developing Alberta’s accreditation model for child care and in establishing the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement.

AECEA established this award in recognition of Sherrill’s monumental contribution to the early childhood profession. The award is presented annually to recognize an individual who has made outstanding contributions to Alberta’s early learning and child care community. Winners have included the following:

- MaryAnn Farebrother, 2014
- Maria Valenti, 2015
- Wendy Reid, 2016
- Cathy Smey Carston, 2017

Stakeholders

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta works closely with a host of provincial and national organizations that share an interest in early learning and child care and the workforce on which the sector is founded. These stakeholders include anti-poverty organizations, human rights advocates, women's rights advocates, unions, charitable foundations, businesses and all three orders of government. A selected list is included in Appendix 3.