

Strategic Direction

The information in this chapter reflects AECEA’s strategic direction as of the date of this report.

AECEA regularly consults with members and stakeholders to refine its strategic direction within the context of an evolving early learning and child care system. This work is ongoing.

AECEA’s Mandate

AECEA’s organizational journey was launched in response to the issue of child care funding and wages. As the association evolved, it became more and more apparent that wages and workforce qualifications go hand in hand. Both elements must be addressed through system-wide change in the early learning and child care sector.

In 2015, AECEA resolved to focus directly on the early childhood educators within the broader child care system. The association’s immediate priority is to get to know who this workforce is and what it needs. This means engaging individual early childhood educators, learning about the workforce, developing strategies to address workforce needs and advocating for much-needed system change. It also means planning for a future in which a well-qualified, well-compensated professional workforce provides Alberta’s children and families with the high-quality child care they deserve and need.

AECEA’s Mission

AECEA is the voice of early childhood educators in advocating for higher educational standards, better wages and working conditions, and comprehensive system supports.

Our mission is to transform Alberta’s early learning and child care workforce into a recognized profession.

AECEA works toward its mission in a variety of ways. The association provides leadership and raises awareness about important issues—including the importance and value of high-quality early learning and child care and its benefit for all society. It engages in policy advocacy to influence governments, community leaders and the public and to make the case that the need for change is urgent. It supports early childhood educators by providing access to information, resources and professional networks of experts and colleagues. It provides professional learning through workshops and conferences and administers a Government of Alberta grant program that helps to fund these and other learning opportunities. It builds respect for early childhood educators and the important work they do.

AECEA is the voice of early childhood educators in advocating for the better wages, higher educational standards, better working conditions and ongoing professional learning that supports high-quality early learning and child care. The association supports its members in their struggle for quality and equality and empowers them as valued, contributing members of an important profession.

In working to achieve its mission, AECEA's goal is to professionalize Alberta's early learning and child care workforce across the spectrum. Only a professional workforce can make a legitimate claim to the professional wages that the important work of early childhood educators deserves.

Professionalism in early learning and child care is founded on education and ongoing professional learning. This means that *all* early childhood educators must have considerably more **education** than the current minimal requirements. Ongoing **professional learning** is also key. Together, formal educational preparation and ongoing professional learning can help educators provide high-quality early learning and care

that nurtures children’s curiosity, exploration, problem-solving and development and engages families in their children’s learning.

AECEA’s Vision

Well-qualified, well-compensated early childhood educators are respected as professionals, valued for their important work, and supported in providing high-quality child care for Alberta’s children and families.

In AECEA’s ideal future...

Early childhood educators are highly qualified, empowered professionals. They deliver high-quality services for children and their families, and they are supported in doing this well.

Early childhood educators earn a living wage—commensurate with their education and experience—with a pension plan and good benefits. Their work is valued by their employers and peers, by other professionals, by the families they serve and by society.

Early childhood educators feel supported as professionals—at their workplace and by their professional association. They work in supportive environments where lifelong learning is valued and best practices are the order of the day.

Early childhood educators see their profession as a viable and rewarding career path. They have opportunities to improve their education and professional learning and to advance in their field.

Early childhood educators have a voice in their professional organization and opportunities for advocacy on issues that affect them. They have the knowledge, skills and confidence to be agents of change and to take charge of their own professional learning and career paths.

Early learning and child care and the professional workforce that supports it are valued as a public investment made for the good of society.

AECEA's Guiding Principles

All children and their families deserve and have a right to accessible, affordable, high-quality early learning and care.

High-quality child care is the cornerstone of a caring, thriving society. It is a public good that must be supported by public investment.

High-quality child care depends on highly qualified early childhood educators who—like all Albertans—deserve fair wages, satisfying work and supportive working conditions.

The work of early childhood educators requires specialized knowledge and pedagogical practices that can only be acquired through formal education and ongoing professional learning.

Early childhood educators need different types of professional learning and support at different stages of their careers.

All Albertans have a stake in high-quality child care. Parents, families, communities, businesses, service agencies, governments and the public share the responsibility for giving the children of our province the best possible early learning and child care experiences.