

Creating an anti-racist child care system in Ontario

Key recommendations to the Ontario government

Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan commits the Ontario government to “building an anti-racism approach into the way that government develops policies, makes decisions, evaluates programs, and monitors outcomes.” As Ontario makes key funding, policy and implementation decisions in the rollout of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, we must work to ensure we are creating an equitable and anti-racist early years and child care system for children, families and the early years workforce.

Child Care and Early Years Act

- Amend the *Child Care and Early Years Act* to enshrine the right of all young children to access regulated, inclusive, culturally safe early learning and child care.

Access and Inclusion Framework

- Ontario is developing an Access and Inclusion Framework for CWELCC. The development of this framework should include extensive consultation with Black, Indigenous and racialized educators and communities.
- The goals of the framework should include;
 - all child care programs are culturally safe and ready to serve any family regardless of race, language, immigration status or ability;
 - all families have the support to readily access and navigate the child care system. This could include expanding cultural language support services;
 - all families should see themselves included and reflected in child care programs.
- The Access and Inclusion Framework should demonstrate a clear commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

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Fees

- Ontario should work to replace the current subsidy system with a barrier-free sliding fee scale with a cap of \$10 per day per family. In the short-term, while this is being developed, increase access to the current subsidy system and remove barriers.

Curriculum

- Ontario's early years curriculum framework, *How Does Learning Happen?*, should be revised to include concepts of anti-oppressive practice, Indigenous world views and anti-racist pedagogy.

Workforce Strategy: Wages and working conditions

- Ontario should implement a provincial salary scale starting at \$30 per hour for RECEs and \$25 per hour for non-RECE staff.
- Ontario should commit to the AECEO's Decent Work Common Table's Decent Work Standards.
- ECE field placements should be funded through a stipend to remove financial barriers and to recognize the value of ECE students' work.

Oversight Advisory Committee / Steering Committee

- The implementation of these recommendations and responses to emerging issues should be monitored and informed by an Advisory Committee made up of appointed positions and volunteers.
- The Committee should be able to make recommendations across ministries.
- The Committee should provide public reports to the Minister and legislature.
- The Committee should prioritize the voices, needs, and experiences of Black Indigenous and racialized educators
- Terms of reference need to address accountability to the public, transparency, a work plan, communication process, including the Committee's scope which should include curriculum, pre-service training, access and inclusion framework.

Over the past year, the OCBCC has been carrying out a project, "Centering the voices of racialized mothers and educators in child care policy", to better understand barriers to access, inclusion and equity in our early learning and child care system. Systemic racism remains a problem across Canadian child-care settings in ways that impact racialized children, families and educators. As we work to expand access and raise the quality of child care we need to ensure we are actively working to create an anti-racist child-care system. The "Centering the voices of racialized mothers and educators in child care policy" project is funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, but the opinions, recommendations and outputs are those of the OCBCC. Learn more about our project at www.childcareontario.org/wage_project



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Key recommendations for post-secondary, training, and professional practice organizations

Over the past year, the OCBC has been carrying out a project, “Centering the voices of racialized mothers and educators in child care policy”, to better understand barriers to access, inclusion and equity in our early learning and child care system. Systemic racism remains a problem across Canadian child-care settings in ways that impact racialized children, families and educators. As we work to expand access and raise the quality of child care we need to ensure we are actively working to create an anti-racist child-care system.

Anti-racism education and training

- Pre-service programs should demonstrate a commitment to decolonize the program and enact the principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. This should be evidenced by:
 - A mandatory course on anti-racist pedagogy;
 - Representation of course instructors from Black, Indigenous and racialized communities across the program and at all levels, provided with coaching, mentoring, and opportunities for career advancement and research opportunities, as well as the delivery of courses;
 - Course outlines, course materials and resources that include Black, Indigenous and racialized scholars and theorists.
- Mandatory anti-racism training as part of membership in the College of ECE. This could use the same model as the current Sexual Abuse Prevention Program. Training could be offered by the CECE directly as well as through community partners.

Paid field placements

- Many of our project's participants identified that paid field placements would make training programs more accessible and demonstrate a commitment to decent work standards- that all labour should be compensated.
- Currently some programs have paid placements, but most are not paid. This will require change at multiple levels (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, College of ECE and employers). Support and advocacy from college/university ECE staff and leadership will be vital to making this change.
- Participants also called for honoraria and compensation for program ECEs who mentor students - operators could provide paid time for student mentorship, preparation, reading, evaluations, meetings etc.

Pathways to credentials

- Increase accessibility to preservice programs by recognizing a variety of pathways to credentials for international students, apprenticeship, and bridging. This information should be made easily accessible through a range of entry points.
- The College of ECE should recognize these pathways to allow individuals to be recognized as early childhood educators based on the CECE requirements, including recognition of paid placements.

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Key recommendations for child care operators

To enact anti-racism, inclusion and equity policy and practice throughout child care organizations, accountability measures will include:

- Ongoing anti-racism, inclusion & equity training for all levels of the organization;
- Ongoing training and coaching to develop and implement anti-racist, inclusive pedagogy;
- Diversity in leadership: A demonstrated commitment to providing opportunities for Black, racialized and Indigenous staff or external candidates to assume leadership roles within the centre. This should include mentorship, coaching, succession planning, recruitment, policies and practices;
- Support for racialized staff in leadership roles through ongoing coaching and mentorship;
- Advisory Committee that includes Black, Indigenous and racialized community members;
- Cultural safety policies and practices;
- Demonstrated commitment to AECEO Decent Work Common Tables' Decent Work Standards;
- Mental health supports tailored to the needs of the staff;
- Honour Truth and Reconciliation and seek ongoing support to decolonize the program;
- Demonstrated commitment to creating accessible programs, where full and meaningful inclusion and equity are experienced by the children and their families. For example, respecting and valuing home language by encouraging children to speak/use their first language;
- Supports for newcomer families to access and navigate the child care system.

What is cultural safety?

Cultural safety is an outcome – it focuses on how racialized people *experience* an environment rather than simply the intent of those providing services. Culturally safe programs are created by ongoing respectful engagement that acknowledges and works to address power imbalances and systemic racism. Culturally safe programs provide an environment that is free of racism and discrimination - one where Black, Indigenous and racialized children, families and staff feel safe and valued.

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