

East Kootenay Region in Desperate Need of Qualified Early Childhood Educators

Submitted by East Kootenay Child Care Task Force

The East Kootenay region is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family, but the beauty of the region is not enough to entice qualified early childhood educators to move to southeastern British Columbia. The number of vacant employment positions is not a surprise to early childhood educators who have left early learning and child care positions. Early childhood educators face significant challenges in the delivery of accessible, affordable, high quality child care. “Long hours, low wages, and staff shortages can take a toll on even the most experienced child care provider,” says Mary Noble, Children First and Success By 6 Coordinator for the East Kootenay region, “early childhood educators who leave their careers just get tired of waiting for governing bodies to address their concerns.”

EAST KOOTENAY EARLY CHILDHOOD WAGE SURVEY

Position	Education	Range	Average
Responsible Adult	20 hours of coursework	\$7-26	\$10-13
Early Childhood Educator Assistant	30 hours of coursework	\$10-23	\$13-16
Early Childhood Educator	1 year certificate	\$7-26	\$16-19
Infant Toddler Educator	2 year diploma	\$13-26	\$16-19
Special Needs Educator	2 year diploma	\$13-32	\$16-19
Dual Certifications	2 ½ year diploma	\$13-32	\$16-19

Courtesy: East Kootenay Child Care Resource and Referral. 2015.

When asked about their future plans, 19 of 39 respondents on the East Kootenay Child Care Needs Assessment stated they were either considering or undecided about finding work outside of the child care field. “Such findings are of extreme concern when programs are already facing significant operational challenges with respect to delivering of accessible, affordable, high quality child care programs,” reports Boyd, the consultant who led the East Kootenay Child Care Needs Assessment, “the loss of any of these educators will likely result in program closures.”

Early childhood educators have an important role in contemporary societies. They work alongside parents, grandparents, and other adults in guardian positions to enhance the quality of young children lives. Early childhood educators and other direct care providers are an extension of family for children who attend preschool, day care, and out of school care programs. It is the quality of the program that makes the difference in the early years.

Since there is generally a correlation between the quality of education and the quality of professional practice, it is concerning to regional service providers to discover that only 5 of 41 early years practitioners who responded to the question about training indicated they were continuing their studies in early childhood education. Financial barriers as well as limited access to quality mentorship programs were identified as deterrents for students.

It doesn't make sense to take on debt to obtain education in a poorly paid field.”

East Kootenay Child Care Assessment

It is time to make early childhood educators and direct care providers a priority. For more information about the East Kootenay Child Care Task Force and the crisis in early learning and child care contact Mary Noble, Children First Coordinator for the East Kootenay region, by phone at 250-426-2542 or by email at ekidsfirst@shaw.ca.

The East Kootenay Child Care Task Force was formed in 2013 by representatives from East Kootenay Children First, East Kootenay Success By 6, East Kootenay Child Care Resource & Referral with other East Kootenay community members who experienced and/or who serve children, families, and child care programs impacted by child care in the East Kootenay area. The East Kootenay Child Care Needs Assessment – Phase One was funded by the Social Grants Program of the Columbia Basin Trust with additional funding and gifts-in-kind from the East Kootenay Child Care Task Force and 45 Conversations. A copy of the full report can be accessed at <http://ekkids.ca/homepage/east-kootenay-child-care-needs-assessment-survey/>.