

Bonus Issue!

Connections has put together a bonus issue of shorter articles that you may find interesting.

**Attracting and Keeping Qualified Staff in Canadian Child Care :
The National Environmental Scan**

By: Connie Miller BA

Background

For nearly a decade, child care organizations across the country have reported recruitment and retention difficulties. In recent years, however, as provinces such as Quebec and Manitoba have begun to enhance public access to child care services, it is apparent that there aren't enough qualified staff to care for and educate Canada's youngest citizens. In 2000, the authors conducted a research project in Nova Scotia, which revealed that the human resource challenges facing the child care sector were due to causes that could be classified into five broad areas—training, policy, standards, workplace and attitude. In 2002, with funding assistance from Human Resources Development Canada, the authors extended their research into other parts of the country. *Attracting and Keeping Qualified Staff in Canadian Child Care* provides the results of that investigation.

Methodology

Five discussion papers were commissioned, each examining one of the causal areas identified in the Nova Scotia project. Reviewing these papers was part of the training process for 20 environmental scan animators that were retained to gather information from the other provinces and territories, as well as from francophones living outside of Quebec. The animators then agreed upon a plan to either further define the issue and/or to address it within the context of the existing resources and historical/cultural context of each province and territory.

The information gathered was both statistical and anecdotal. The animators shared their findings in 2003 and also considered the findings of a sixth commissioned paper that offered a labour perspective on Canada's child care sector.

Key Findings

- ❑ Communities across the country are facing similar human resource challenges within the child care sector, and the underlying causes are appropriately categorized by the criteria identified in the Nova Scotia project.
- ❑ The national data indicates that each one of the five causal areas is complex in its own right, and relates to the other causal areas in ways that impact upon the efficacy of any strategies taken to address them.
- ❑ The human resource challenges facing Canada's child care sector are exacerbated by a socio-political climate that undervalues women's work, and a culture that rejects the notion of children as citizens whose rights include having their developmental needs respected and met.
- ❑ There is little agreement among early childhood education and care providers about basic issues such as who their customers are—the children themselves, the children's parents, or in the case of those who provide subsidized services, the funding agency. Historically, this ambivalence and fragmentation has limited the sector's ability to respond to the systemic oppression it faces.

Key findings Continued...

- Early learning and care providers across the country share a common desire to work more closely together to find solutions that are national in scope.
- Given the diversity of the sector, and the need to recognize the efforts of non-credentialed personnel, home child care providers and support staff, an alternative model would have to be developed before Canada's early learning and care providers could adopt an organized labour approach. Collective bargaining could, however, help address the sector's recruitment and retention challenges and enhance quality, by facilitating working conditions and wage rates that are supportive of providers' abilities to do their jobs.

Conclusion

The authors conclude that having further defined the causative factors related to recruitment and retention in the child care sector, the challenge is to maintain this momentum by actively seeking to address these causes. They suggest a multi-faceted approach that aggregates the common interests of early learning and care providers across the country, and stress the importance of working toward societal recognition and respect as a first step to addressing the sector's recruitment and retention issues.

Resources

- The discussion papers are posted on Child Care Connections' Nova Scotia Child Care Link web site <http://pages.istar.ca/~cccns/index.html>. You can conduct your own environmental survey by following the scan process or access the papers directly. The papers are also available for a nominal fee to cover the cost of shipping and handling by contacting Connections.

- The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council has developed summaries of the papers. These are available on their web site along with other information related to human resource issues in child care.

CCCNS Resource Library:

- Albrecht, K. (2002). *The Right Fit: Recruiting, Selecting and Orienting Staff*. New Horizons. CCCNS No. A-150-Alb.
- Beach, J., Bertrand, J. & Cleveland, G. (1998). *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration: A Human Resource Study of Child Care in Canada, Main Report..* CCCNS No. L-010-Bea/MR.
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- Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, & Tougas. (2000). *You Bet I Care! A Canada-Wide Survey on: Wages, Working Conditions, and Practices in Child Care Centres*. Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being. CCCNS No. L-010-Doh.
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- Haack, P.; Roberson, A. & Vardell, R. (2001). "Imagine! Child Care - A Great Place for Teachers, Too," *Child Care Information Exchange*, 142: 50-52. CCCNS No. A-150-Haa/CCIE.

cont ... p.4...

Give Me a Hug ~ Please !

by Carolyn Simpson

How many of us enjoy a massage or a welcoming hug from a loved one? Yet we often withhold the very thing, the very touch, we ourselves enjoy and indeed need. Research has long proven the benefit of therapeutic touch. The “laying on of hands” or “healing touch” have the power to increase heart rate, release endorphins, generate circulation, reduce stress, improves digestion to name a few of the health benefits.

But what about the benefit to our emotional well being? It is said that a touch can say what words can not. However, as a result of the fear of being accused of inappropriate touch, many of us do not touch others. I have had conversations with supervisors of early childhood programs who have adopted a “no touch” policy. All in an effort to protect staff and children. I wonder, are we “protecting” our children? Have we considered the effect not touching may have on the children in our care? I am not suggesting we through caution and good judgement aside. I firmly believe however, that policy and best practices must be rooted in what we know to be best for the overall health and well being of the children in our care.

Our skin is the largest organ we have. Some of our strongest memories will be our skin or touch memories. It’s almost like we were meant to touch and be touched. Yet, our culture is moving away from this very necessary interaction. Given that touch is our earliest form of communication, and if we accept the emotional, physical and physiological benefits of touch, we must ask ourselves what is being lost when children grow up in a society which may be touch deprived?

As early childhood educators we are responsible to provide for the emotional well being of the children in our care. We are nurturers, caregivers, and educators. Children require adults who will provide care and nurturing. Bonding with a child occurs when we communicate affection and care through touching, cuddling and holding the child. A child’s sense of security and trust will come from these experiences.

So what can we do? Holding a child for a story, rubbing a back at naptime, a tap on the shoulder, cuddling a crying child, holding a hand, an early morning or late day hug, hey... an anytime of day hug !! You will sense when a child needs that emotional support that touch can bring. Will there be children who may not want to be touched ? Yes, there will be.

We must always be respectful of a child’s personal space and responsive to their request not to be touched. If you are ever unsure, ask. Reach out to the children in your care, nurture their soul, and provide the positive skin memories that will be with them all the days of their lives. Give them a hug — please!

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<http://www.energetic-balance.com/healingtouch.html>
<http://www.miami.edu/touch-research/>
<http://pages.zdnet.com/jerryvest/id9.html>
<http://www.mind-body.org/touch.htm>

Additional Resources:

<http://www.intouchinfantmassage.com/static/intouchinfantmassage/reading.php>
<http://www.touchthefuture.org/services/bonding/main.htm>
<http://www.tlcschool.com/articles/dimensions2.html>
<http://www.wesleyan.edu/synthesis/FRIDAY/frifinal/artdm.htm#science>
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Carolyn Simpson is a consultant in the Kindergarden Program of the Prince Edward Island Department of Education and a former instructor in the ECE Program at Holland College in Charlottetown.

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- Willer, B. & Johnson, L.C. (1989). *The Crisis is Real: Recruiting & Retaining Early Childhood Staff*. NAEYC. CCCNS No. A-151-Wil.

New Resources in the Connections Library:

- Moving Mountains: Work, Family and Children with Special Needs, Canadian Union of Postal Workers' Special Needs Project, Ottawa: 2002. CCCNS No. H-112-CUPW.
- Occupational Standards for Child Care Practitioners, by Gillian Doherty. Canadian Child Care Federation, Ottawa: 2003. CCCNS No. F-010-Doh.
- Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Education and Care Programs, Vankellers (ed.). Canadian Child Care Federation, Ottawa: 2003. CCCNS No. G-092-
- Targeting Early Childhood Care and Education: Myths and Realities, by Gillian Doherty. The Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto, 2001. CCCNS No. J-021-Doh.
- The Visionary Director: A Handbook for Dreaming, Organizing & Improvising in Your Center, by Margie Carter & Deb Curtis. Redleaf Press, Minneapolis, MN: 1998. CCCNS No. A-150-Cur.

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