



Accord on Early Learning and Early Childhood Education

Purpose of the Accord

A major shift has occurred over the past 50 years in the discourse relating to the care and education of young children. From a focus on childcare as a “women’s issue” relative to workforce engagement, there is now a focus on early children education with its own pedagogical discourse on child development and learning. This Accord by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) seeks to address the uneven provision of quality early learning experiences by highlighting practices that focus on the learning and care of all children; promoting improved, better connected education for preschool and elementary children; and recognizing educator knowledge as vital to effective education for early learners and their families.

Many provincial educational jurisdictions in Canada have now developed and adopted early learning curriculum frameworks that emphasize child-centred, play-based, imaginative learning that attend to the whole child’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Most jurisdictions also have policies promoting and supporting the professionalization of early care and learning. The field has moved considerably beyond the regimented care that asylums and orphanages provided to children in Canada in the 19th century; and beyond the well-intentioned caregivers and “baby-sitters.” The fear that curriculum will turn early learning and childcare into formal schooling at too early an age is not without justification given the eagerness of provincial educational jurisdictions, often with the best of intentions, to adopt early years evaluation and assessment tools on children as young as three.

The Accord on Early Learning and Early Childhood Education acknowledges the importance of the early years in shaping children’s lives. The Accord highlights principles and practices that focus on the achievement of all children, and the responsibilities education faculties have for improving and advocating for education for preschool and primary children. The Accord also recognizes and respects educator knowledge and decision-making as vital to educational effectiveness for early learners.



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Association of Canadian Deans of Education

Principles

1. Early learning education focuses on the whole child.
2. Children are capable and ready to learn, and should be viewed as full of potential.
3. Adults are ethically responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of children.
4. Families and community are valued and respected.
5. Curricula are responsive to children and families.
6. Supportive relationships and interactions between teachers and children are valued and nurtured.
7. Early learning educators and environments provide meaningful and relevant opportunities for young children to interact with one another.
8. Early learning educators, appropriate environments, and community resources engage the minds of young children.
9. Early learning takes into account a wide range of philosophical, pedagogical, and theoretical approaches that inform policy and practice.
10. Early learning educators engage in care-full documentation of student learning and their own teaching.
11. Diversity and social responsibility are valued.
12. Policy and practice in early learning are informed by current educational research, knowledge, and appreciation of this field as critical components of public education.

Goals and Commitments

ACDE supports the development of policies and practices in faculties to enable the application of the principles in this accord.

ACDE supports early learning practices that are attuned to the uniqueness of each child, and that are responsive to the social and cultural contexts in which each child lives.

ACDE supports policies and practices that encourage an integrated approach to services for early learning and care.

ACDE supports the development and use of assessment practices that help educators understand each child and provide evidence of the ways teaching practices and research are working in the classroom for families, educators and community at large. These practices are not linked solely to standards, testing and outcomes.