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# ECPN's Early Child Pedagogist Program: Professional Development

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Early Childhood Pedagogy Network

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The Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN) was introduced to *The Early Childhood Educator* readers in 2020 (see Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kummen & Hodgins, 2020). We gave an overview of the project and traced the history of the pedagogist role in BC, which grew from the work of two earlier projects: the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project (2011–2018) and the Investigating Quality (IQ) Project learning circles (2006–2011) (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kummen, & Hodgins, 2021).<sup>1</sup> Since then, we have shared glimpses of the ECPN's pedagogical work in *The Early Childhood Educator*, including the journal's Fall 2021 special issue and the more recent three-part series on play (ECPN 2024a, ECPN 2024b, ECPN 2024c).

In this issue, we offer an update on implementing the pedagogist role in BC through the Early Childhood Pedagogist Program.<sup>2</sup>

## Early Childhood Pedagogist Program

In August 2023, we were excited to start offering early childhood pedagogy professional development services through a contract with the Ministry of Education and Child Care. With our valued long-term project partner, ECEBC, and leaning

on the established relationships and work experiences from the ECPN's first phase, we recrafted the Pedagogist Program to meet new government deliverables and a streamlined project focus and budget. (For highlights from 2018–2023, please see the ECPN Evaluation Briefs: <https://ecpn.ca/category/evaluation-briefs/>.) Working with what had been known as the community stream in the 2018–2023 phase, we developed three interrelated avenues to orient beginning and experienced educators to Ministry-approved frameworks and support their theory-practice integration:

- Direct and continuous pedagogical support
- Sustained and collaborative dialogues
- Virtual learning opportunities and digital library delivered by ECPN pedagogists, pedagogical coordinators, and directors

From August 1, 2023 to July 31, 2024, through the Pedagogist Program, the ECPN delivered over 24,000 hours of professional learning to more than 3,000 early childhood professionals across BC. This included direct collaboration with educators in early childhood centres, engaging dialogues within and between programs, focused discussions with community educators, and webinars and online courses.

The ECPN pedagogists provided in-person support to educators in more than 30 different communities across all five BC health regions. ECPN also provided virtual professional development opportunities, such as webinars, for educators in BC communities as well as other provinces and countries.

Based on data collected from educators and families through online surveys, virtual focus groups, and informal communication throughout the year, most participants in the Pedagogist Program reported that the program enhanced their knowledge, understanding, and practices in early childhood education. Survey data revealed that 90% of educators in a centre that regularly collaborates with a pedagogist reported that this engagement enriched their knowledge and application of inclusive practices. Additionally, 94% indicated that working with a pedagogist deepened their understanding and practices of the play-learn connection. As well, 96% reported improvements in their knowledge, understanding, and use of critical reflection in their practice.

*"[Our pedagogist] deepened the conversations I have been having with my coworkers and the types of materials we work with in the centre. She has helped us all to slow down*

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<sup>1</sup>The ECPN, Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project, and the Investigating Quality (IQ) Project learning circles were funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

<sup>2</sup>The Early Childhood Pedagogist Program is funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

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more and to do more quiet observation with our children.” (Educator, Island region, July 2024 Survey)

“This is a very inclusive space and a lot of that is because of the centre’s commitments that my pedagogist, my co-teacher and I have worked on—with the families, with the children—and the kind of space that we wanted to create ... we really worked hard to create those conditions with our pedagogist; what this space is and what this centre is going to uphold and prioritize.” (Educator, Northern region, June 2024 Focus Group)

“The ECPN pedagogist that is involved with our centre has opened up ways of thinking and engaging with children that I would not have otherwise. They enhance knowledge and help guide quality curriculum daily. Pedagogists are an asset to centres and educators. They are helping to elevate the ECE field and education for young children.” (Educator, Northern region, June 2024 Survey)

“[Work with a pedagogist] fosters an explosion of creativity, storytelling, and drawing skills in my child. My child brings home so many tree questions we investigate together. I think our pedagogist has been a wonderful part of my child’s daycare experience and feel very lucky to benefit.” (Parent, Vancouver Coastal region, June 2024 Focus Group)

Survey data collected from educator participants after webinars, online course offerings, focused dialogues, and monthly collaborative engagement groups in community indicate that most participants found these offerings had a positive impact on their early childhood knowledge, understanding, and practices. For example, 94% of survey respondents reported that the material presented in focused dialogues and

ongoing engagements added to their knowledge and 87% reported they were likely to bring ideas from the session(s) to their work with young children. Similar findings were reported from webinar participants, with 99% noting the content added to their knowledge and 87% thinking they were likely to bring some of the webinar ideas to their work with young children. Finally, all participants who completed the online course offerings reported that the material presented had added to their knowledge.

“Thank you so much for these conversations. Thinking with you and the resources you share help to keep the local conversations going and encourage us to revisit, keep thinking and listening for alternative stories, voices, and relationships.” (Post-secondary instructor, Interior region, April 2024 Post-Webinar Survey)

As we move into the 2024–2025 school year, the ECPN team is looking forward to the year ahead and, with our past experiences and all the feedback we receive, to continuing to improve the Pedagogist Program and grow our reach to educators across the province.

We invite readers to visit the ECPN website for field notes at <https://ecpn.ca/category/field-notes/>, blog posts at <https://ecpn.ca/category/blogs/>, and pedagogical narrations at <https://ecpn.ca/category/pedagogical-narrations/> that emerged from pedagogists work with early childhood professionals during the 2023–2024 school year. Those interested in learning more about the project or how your centre might work with an ECPN pedagogist can contact the ECPN through the website or at [ecpn@uwo.ca](mailto:ecpn@uwo.ca).

## References

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- ECPN. (2024b). Who/what is at work in play. *The Early Childhood Educator*, 39(2), 6–9.
- ECPN. (2024c). Play’s liberatory potential. *The Early Childhood Educator*, 39(3), 33–34.
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- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., Kummen, K., & Hodgins, B. D. (2020). Pedagogists and the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network. *The Early Childhood Educator*, 35(1), 17–20.
- The ECPN mobilizes the call for transformational change in early childhood education in British Columbia. In collaboration with communities, the ECPN is committed to creating conditions for pedagogical leadership through the pedagogist role. The ECPN extends and formalizes the work of the Investigating Quality and Pedagogical Facilitator projects.*