

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION REPORT 2020

COMING EARLY 2021



Early Childhood Education Report 2020

## Methodology Update

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Benchmarks		Value
INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE	ECE under common department or ministry	0.5
	Common ECE supervisory unit	0.5
	Common ECE policy framework	1
	Common local authority for ECE administration and delivery	1
FUNDING	At least 2/3 of child care funding goes to program operations	1
	<b>Managed</b> salary and fee scale in licensed child care	1
	At least 3% of overall budget devoted to ECE*	1
ACCESS	Full day kindergarten offered	1
	50% of 2-4-year olds attend an ECE program	1
	Funding conditional on including children with special needs in licensed child care	1
LEARNING ENVIRONEMNT	ECE curriculum framework	<b>0.25</b>
	<b>ECE curriculum framework use is mandatory</b>	<b>0.25</b>
	Alignment of ECE programs with kindergarten	0.5
	At least 2/3 of staff in programs for 2-4-year olds are qualified	0.5
	Kindergarten educators require ECE qualifications	0.5
	Salaries of ECEs at least 2/3 of teachers	0.5
	<b>ECE professional certification required</b>	<b>0.25</b>
	<b>ECE professional development required</b>	<b>0.25</b>
ACCOUNTABILITY	Annual progress reports posted (2017 or later)	1
	Facilities standards for ECE program including kindergarten	1
	Population measures for preschool collected and reported	1

**\*May include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Support funding if part of ECE budget**

## The ECE Report Categories

The 21 benchmarks selected for the ECE Report are organized into five categories:

### Governance

Four benchmarks explore policy and operational oversight—is governance split between multiple departments, or does it have coherent direction, a common policy framework with goals, timelines and consistent support for service providers?

### Funding

Three benchmarks examine the adequacy of funding and its influence on supporting program quality and equitable access.

### Access

Three benchmarks assess the numbers of children attending ECE programs and if barriers to participation are addressed.

### Learning environment

Six benchmarks examine whether curriculum, program standards, and trained and adequate resourced staff support the quality of programming.

### Accountability

Three benchmarks assess whether jurisdictions are meeting their reporting commitments, have standards for program quality, and are monitoring and reporting child outcomes.

Each category is assigned 3 points for a total of 15. Full and half points are assigned with the intention of providing equal weight to each category.



## Four benchmarks are allocated to the governance of ECE systems:

### **Benchmark 1: ECE under common department/ ministry**

The minimum for the benchmark is a single ministry/department with oversight for child care as well as kindergarten and other education-funded preschool programming.

### **Benchmark 2: Common ECE supervisory unit**

This benchmark examines if integration has gone beyond co-locating child care and kindergarten programs under the same roof while they still operate as distinct entities. It assesses whether all ECE services are under a common supervisory unit, where specialized staff members have shared responsibilities for both public (school-offered) and private (child care/preschool) ECE programs.

### **Benchmark 3: Common ECE policy framework**

Administrators, systems managers, and educators require a clearly communicated policy direction, with vision, objectives, timelines and benchmarks to guide their work. Some provinces have developed policy directions for child care and/or school-offered ECE programs. The minimum for this benchmark determines if policy directions encompass education and child care/preschool, aligning them to support the learning continuum.

### **Benchmark 4: Common local authority for ECE management and administration**

The integration of policy frameworks at the provincial level should be reflected in service management and delivery on the ground, thereby removing the necessity of parents and children to navigate between service silos. All ECE services, both public and private, should link to a common local authority responsible for supporting standards reflected in provincial

## Three benchmarks are allocated to the funding of ECE systems:

### **Benchmark 5: At least two-thirds of child care funding goes to program operations**

Percentage allocations to program operations, special needs integration and parent fee subsidies are determined through public reporting. Funding for children with special needs is included as part of operations, since most jurisdictions deliver this funding to child care programs rather than through parent fee subsidies. The two-thirds benchmark for program funding was chosen because greater system stability is associated when centres receive direct operational funding.

### **Benchmark 6: Managed salary and fee scale**

This benchmark reflects provincial policies establishing a maximum parent fee scale and a minimum wage scale for educators. Such policies contain the market nature of child care funding and delivery.

### **Benchmark 7: At least 3 percent of provincial budget is devoted to early childhood education**

Percentages are calculated using total 2019/2020 spending estimates to March 31, 2020 as stated in budget documents. ECE spending includes total 2019/2020 estimates to March 31, 2020 for the operation of licensed child care for infants to school aged children, as well as school delivered kindergarten, pre-kindergarten and school-based parent/caregiver/child programs. P/T funding to Aboriginal Head Start is also included. ASD funding is included if it part of the ECE budget.



Three benchmarks are allocated to access to ECE programs:

**Benchmark 8: Full-day kindergarten offered**

Kindergarten is the sole early education program that is universally available across Canada. Full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds is now the norm; it is offered by 10 out of 13 jurisdictions. Full-day kindergarten also reflects the duration threshold of 20 plus hours participation, which research indicates is more likely to improve academic and social outcomes for children.

**Benchmark 9: Fifty percent of 2 to 4-year olds regularly attend an ECE program**

This benchmark focuses on 2 to 4-year olds, the group for which there is high unmet demand for ECE. Five-year olds were excluded since the majority attend kindergarten. Infants are a less likely group to participate in ECE programs because of parental leave. Determining the accurate enrolment of children in ECE programs is challenging. Schools tend to report enrollment numbers. Child care maintains a record of spaces, some of which may be unused, while drop-in programs report capacity. The number of 2 to 4-year olds attending ECE programs will be estimated using government reports of school offered pre-kindergarten programs including parent/child programs in British Columbia and Ontario, child care, nursery school, and Aboriginal Head Start availability. Care was taken not to double count children attending pre-kindergarten who may also attend child care. UNICEF's benchmark is set at 80 percent of 4-year-olds regularly attending an ECE program and 25 percent of children under 3-years old. Fifty percent of 2 to 4-year olds represents a reasonable and achievable interim benchmark for Canada.

**Benchmark 10: Funding is conditional on including children with special needs**

The threshold for this benchmark is provincial/territorial policy that requires programs to give equal consideration to the enrollment of children with special needs as a condition of funding. Funding as an incentive without policy directions does not provide parents with recourse if their child is excluded from participation.



## Six benchmarks are allocated to the learning environment of ECE programs:

### **Benchmark 11: An early childhood curriculum/framework**

ECE curriculum frameworks are organic documents resulting from the best available research and broad consultation. They are holistic and child-centred, with clear goals across a range of developmental areas to which educators and children can aspire. The report determines if provinces have developed a curriculum framework for early education settings AND if use is required.

### **Benchmark 12: Alignment of early childhood framework with kindergarten**

Children move from preschool into kindergarten at different ages and stages of development. The kindergarten and early childhood curriculum frameworks should align to reflect this.

### **Benchmark 13: Programs for 2 to 4-year olds require at least two-thirds of staff to have ECE qualifications**

Child/staff ratios across jurisdictions are quite similar, but the number of qualified staff required by policy or regulation varies widely. For this benchmark, qualified represents the period of post-secondary training provincial regulation considers necessary to be recognized as a qualified staff member for the purpose of meeting staff:child ratios in an ECE setting. ECE qualifications are not standard across jurisdictions. UNICEF recommends at least 50 percent of staff have three or more years of post-secondary training and 80 percent of staff working directly with children have post-secondary training in child development. No Canadian jurisdiction meets this UNICEF standard. Two-thirds of staff must have a minimum of one year of post-secondary level training in early childhood development.

### **Benchmark 14: Kindergarten educators require ECE qualifications**

Public kindergarten is the dominant form of ECE provision. For many children it will be their only preschool experience. Quality in ECE settings depends on educators trained to understand the developmental needs of young children. A review of provincial policies determined if ECE training is required for educators in kindergarten classrooms.

### **Benchmark 15: Salaries of early childhood educators are at least two-thirds of teacher salaries**

Low compensation levels for early childhood educators are recognized in the literature as contributing to recruitment and retention challenges, which in turn impact the quality of ECE programming. The compensation gap between elementary school teachers and early childhood educators reflects the challenge. These issues become more evident as early childhood educators move into school settings to work alongside teachers. This benchmark looks at the salary gap between teachers and early childhood educators by jurisdiction as an indicator of the relative value placed on the professions. The rates for 2020 report were therefore obtained from the British Columbia salary analysis report of teachers and ECE across the country.

### **Benchmark 16: ECE professional certification and/or professional development**

Registration, certification and classification are all processes that provide official recognition as an early childhood educator and enable the registrant to work in an ECE program. These processes are proxies for the value placed on the profession. Ongoing professional development is critical to maintaining a workforce that is knowledgeable about current child development and educational practice and is closely associated with high-quality early childhood settings. The benchmark reflects provincial policies requiring professional certification as a condition of practice and/or regular professional development as a condition of maintaining good standing in the ECE profession.

## Three benchmarks are allocated to accountability for ECE systems/programs:

### **Benchmark 17: Annual progress reports are current and posted (2017 or later)**

Federal/provincial/territorial early childhood agreements include annual reporting by each jurisdiction on progress made in meeting the terms of the agreements. As part of the March 2003 Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care, governments committed to providing annual reports on early child programming, including the following information:

- Descriptive and expenditure information on all early learning and child care programs and services;
- Indicators of affordability, such as number of children receiving subsidies, income and social eligibility for fee subsidies and maximum subsidy by age of child; and
- Indicators of quality, such as training requirements, child/ caregiver ratios and group size, where available.

The minimum benchmark proposed is that the responsible ministry/department/agency has published a comprehensive report on ECE services within the last three years. Quebec was not a signatory to the agreements and has its own reporting process. Although COVID-19 has seemingly delayed release of current annual reports, this benchmark required a report to have been released at least within the last 3 years.

### **Benchmark 18: Standards for ECE programs (including kindergarten)**

Learning outcomes for children cannot be considered apart from the inputs they experience in ECE settings. Standards governing health and safety, facilities and class size are important minimums for all ECE programs. Also important are standards outlining pedagogical practices, implementation of curriculum goals and the set-up of the learning environment. The benchmark proposes these minimum program standards for all ECE settings including kindergarten.

### **Benchmark 19: Population measures for preschool children collected and reported**

Public reporting informs communities about how their children are doing and what can be done to improve children's early learning environments. The minimum benchmark is that a province or territory has used the Early Development Instrument or an equivalent tool and reported on the findings at least once in the past three years. Although COVID-19 has cancelled population measures for this year, if measures were scheduled to be taken and were cancelled for reasons of the pandemic, the benchmark will be considered reached.

