B.C. expands early childhood education dual-credit programs for high school students [1]

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EXCERPTS:

More students in grades 11 and 12 will be able to earn both high school and post-secondary credits toward careers in early childhood education with the introduction of 30 new dual-credit programs at school districts throughout B.C.

“Early childhood educators (ECEs) play a vital role in supporting the growth and potential of our youngest learners in B.C.,” said Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care. “Investing in the education of ECEs is investing in children, which is why we’re expanding the ECE dual-credit program to give more students opportunities to study and work in early learning and child care – a rewarding and in-demand career.”

Participating school districts will be offering these programs as partnerships with nearby post-secondary institutions. They will be funded by a $4.1-million provincial investment provided through Budget 2022 and $1.15 million in funding from the federal government that was provided in fiscal year 2021-22 through the 2021-25 Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement to better support workforce development in the child care sector.

“There is a strong need for early childhood educators now and in the coming decade, and that’s why we are working to give high school students who are interested in a career as an ECE an opportunity to get a head start on their post-secondary studies,” said Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education and Child Care. “High school students who complete dual-credit courses are more likely to graduate on time and transition to post-secondary education, leading to better career opportunities, while also helping develop our province’s workforce in the early childhood education sector.”

Through this initiative, approximately 800 secondary students are expected to enrol in early childhood education dual-credit programs by the end of 2025. Tuition costs for the courses are covered by the program, meaning that students’ entry into post-secondary training comes with fewer expenses.

”There is no child care system without a strong and skilled early learning and child care workforce,” said Karina Gould, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. “Early childhood educators do incredible work in supporting families and children, and these programs are a meaningful step to ensure students have access to the tools, resources and training they need to succeed, especially as we build more child care spaces across the country.”

Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training, said: “On top of all the great support early childhood educators provide to children and young families in B.C., they also support our economy and our efforts to address labour shortages. By increasing the number of people studying to become early childhood educators and increasing parents’ ability to find child care, we are supporting parents to return to work or explore education or skills training themselves.”

Since 2018, more than 30,500 new licensed child care spaces have been funded for families in B.C. It is anticipated that more than half of those will be in operation by the end of 2022. B.C. anticipates there will be more than 10,000 net new job openings for certified ECEs and assistants in the coming decade.

“I was interested in pursuing this program because of the flexibility it provided as I am still in high school,” said Samantha Justice, a Grade 11 student at Esquimalt High in the Victoria area. “This program is helping pave my career path forward as it is giving me opportunities to connect with the community and ECE experiences. What I love about this program is how it highlights inclusivity, diversity and the uniqueness of everyone.”

Through the 10-year ChildCareBC plan, B.C. is committed to building a future where child care is a core service that all families can rely on. To achieve this, government is investing in ECE recruitment by improving access to training, professional development opportunities and bursaries and providing enhanced wages. ECEs are crucial to the province’s economic recovery plan that enables more parents – especially mothers – to pursue work, education and other opportunities.

Quick Facts:

In February 2022, B.C. and the Government of Canada announced a wide range of ECE supports and professional development opportunities supported by the 2021-25 Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Federal investments provided to the Province through the early childhood workforce funding complement and support the Canada-wide early learning and child care vision.

Canada and British Columbia signed an extension agreement in August 2021 through which the Government of Canada will invest more than $323 million between 2021-22 and 2024-25, including $49.2 million in one-time workforce funding in 2021-22.

Region: British Columbia [3]

Tags: investment in social services [4]
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