

# Research supports the need to recognize the right to free early childhood education and free secondary education <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## Excerpts

We, the undersigned individuals, are scholars, experts, and researchers on the education, development, wellbeing, and rights of children and adolescents. We write to express our support for a new optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) focused on the right to free education. The aim of this initiative is to ensure recognition under international law of the right to free early childhood education and free secondary education, alongside the already-existing right to free and compulsory primary education.

Well-established scientific evidence shows unequivocally that education is foundational to children’s healthy development, wellbeing, fulfilment of their full potential, and their lifelong prospects. Not only is education valuable in its own right, it has a multiplier effect—that is, education helps position children to secure their other rights during childhood and subsequently as adults. At a societal level, investing in education is any country’s most effective policy tool to ensure prosperity, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

...

International consensus and frameworks (e.g., the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals) urge access to high-quality early childhood education, which, according to the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s “General Comment No. 7 on Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood”, must be understood as beginning at birth. Similarly, evidence from research on adolescent development reveals the importance of secondary education to children’s healthy development and lifelong prospects, including their capacity to navigate the complexities of our world in the 21st Century.

While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call on states to ensure all children have access to quality early childhood education and care (SDG 4.2) and free secondary education (SDG 4.1), global monitoring data show the world is far from achieving the 2030 targets. Significant disparities persist among—and within—countries and regions, compounding stark inequalities of access, opportunity, condition, and outcome, especially for children from disadvantaged and marginalized communities. We therefore call for an urgent renewed commitment to education systems that realize just and equitable outcomes for ALL children. And we believe it is essential that this commitment be backed by a legal mandate to ensure its success.

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**Related link:** Children’s Ombudsman proposes early childhood education as constitutional right <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** International <sup>[4]</sup>

**Tags:** children’s rights <sup>[5]</sup>

social policy <sup>[6]</sup>

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## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/06/research-supports-need-recognize-right-free-early-childhood> <sup>[2]</sup>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/06/05/research-supports-need-recognize-right-free-early-childhood-education-and-free> <sup>[3]</sup>

<https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/03/children-s-ombudsman-proposes-early-childhood-education> <sup>[4]</sup>

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