

Childcare workers to teach grades 1,2 ^[1]

must upgrade credentials first

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EXCERPTS

The Prince Edward Island government has made a controversial decision to allow childcare workers and early childcare educators who upgrade their credentials to teach Grades 1 and 2, as well as kindergarten.

But the idea of kindergarten teachers teaching other grades, doesn't sit well with substitute teachers.

"I'm outraged that the ministry has decided to allow people who are not qualified to teach grades 1 and 2 to be teaching these grades when there are line-ups of hundreds of teachers with full qualifications," substitute teacher Judith Reeson said.

The rights of teachers currently in the system are being overlooked, she said, and she's written letters to the editor and asked for meeting with government officials.

Resson said early childhood educators do not have the academic qualifications, even after they complete the upgrades.

Annie Lagace likes the change. She's leaving work at a daycare to teach French Immersion kindergarten. On top of her new job, she'll be going back to school to get her Bachelor of Education.

"It could be nice, they are still young, they are not too far away from the kindergarten," Lagace said. "So I think we can bring some good things to the first and second grade."

UPEI has created a Bachelor of Education Kindergarten program, which early childhood educators must take. Once they complete it, they'll also be eligible to teach grades 1 and 2.

Prior to this fall, kindergarten classes were mostly held in private day centres. The government decided last year to move kindergarten to the public school system.

Linda Lowther, senior director of public education with the provincial Department of Education, disagrees.

"They will learn about literacy, they'll be learning about all kinds of methodologies for teaching the primary grades," she said. "They already have two years of very good training."

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission approved the new degree program, but it also raised concerns about the level of preparation the new grads would have to teach other grades.

Lowther said the kindergarten teachers will be well prepared, and there are lots of opportunities remaining for substitute teachers.

"Teachers who are presently substituting have access to all the grades, from K to 12, to teach all kinds of positions," she said.

The P.E.I. Teachers' Federation said it is comfortable with eventually allowing these new teachers to teach grades 1 and 2.

President Carrie St. Jean said early childhood educators will bring a huge amount of expertise to the school system.

The province has agreed that there will be no job losses within the first two years of the kindergarten changeover. It's also not allowing kindergarten teachers to teach other grades within the first few years.

-reprinted from CBC News

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[2]

Tags: public opinion ^[3]

kindergarten ^[4]

school system ^[5]

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/08/childcare-workers-teach-grades-12> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7852>
[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/public-opinion> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/kindergarten> [5]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/school-system>